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IN PRAISE OF NORTH WALES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ROUND ABOUT WILTSHIRE
THE ROMANCE OF NORTHUMBERLAND
THE AVON AND SHAKESPEARE'S COUNTRY
A BOOK OF THE SEVERN
OWEN GLYNDWR
HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN N. WALES
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IN PRAISE OF NORTH WALES

BY

A. G. BRADLEY

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PREFACE

NO apology is needed for a book on North Wales, though I am inclined to think that I ought to offer one to that noble region for suggesting in the title-page that it needs praise from anybody. Perhaps that is the reason that since I wrote my former work on the country nearly thirty years ago, no writer has attempted the subject, outside the necessary guide-books! This volume does not profess to be anything in the nature of a guide-book. It is, in fact, a revisitation of many old and familiar scenes with all or most of which I was in constant touch till the Great War—in short, a little summer tour amid the choicest regions of North Wales. Nor am I forgetting Mr. Baring-Gould's scholarly book on this same subject published in 1908. But it dealt rather with its archæological and historical side than with scenery and topography.

When I was young, most South country people of discrimination were acquainted with North Wales. Nowadays, whether in London or the country, judging not merely from personal experience but from the whole trend of the London press, there seems to be in the South a curious absent-mindedness towards the highest type of scenery this island affords south of the Scottish Highlands. For precisely the same remarks will apply to the English Lake District, which in all physical essentials, scale, distinction, and beauty is the prototype of North Wales. These two regions stand alone, unrivalled, and unapproached if only, though not quite only, for the obvious reason that nowhere else are there any true mountains, nor yet any lakes, to speak of. And all too so readily accessible by road or rail! I venture to hope that these pages may give pleasure to lovers of Wales in the Midlands, the North, or Wales itself, and help to dissipate the mist which seems for a generation to have obscured its beauties from South country holiday makers.

A. G. B.

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IN PRAISE OF NORTH WALES

CHAPTER I

THE VALE OF LLANGOLLEN

THE Vale of Llangollen! The very music and rhythm of the name are in singular harmony with one of the most enchanting scenes in Britain. And I hope I may make the claim with a due sense of responsibility and proportion. It has often been made by others with a sufficient knowledge of their own country to indulge their fancy for comparison with balance and restraint.

At the mature age of seven—and more years ago than I care to think of—and perhaps in this particular rather curiously precocious and susceptible, I stood on the top of a Shropshire hill, as a child visitor from a Midland county. Dim shapes of, to me, strange and weird contour rose high upon the far western horizon. My hostess told me that they were the Welsh mountains. Though not untravelled for such an infant, I had never before seen a mountain, but, with a strong geographical bent, blended with an infant passion for Scott's " Lady of the Lake ", had greatly longed to. The very word spelt mystery, and the sight of those far, shadowy heights thrilled me strangely. One of our party remarked that they were the hills enclosing the Vale of Llangollen. The mellifluous phrase caught my childish fancy, and seemed to shed a further glory on the distant scene, towards which I remember a summer sun was sinking. I saw a vision then and there, no doubt from some familiar picture on a wall, or in a book, of this fairy vale with the sonorous name. It was so indelibly imprinted on my brain that I can see the imaginary landscape still, though I have known the actual scene itself through and through for forty years! And the latter too is so much more beautiful than the picture of my dreams, which haunted me for some strange reason through all my boyhood and in many countries.

The elderly lady who stood beside me on the hill told me all about the old maids of Llangollen with their men's beaver hats and their queer clothes, and they too went into the picture. In after years I came to understand that as a girl she had known the whimsical old ladies well, and had stayed with them at Plâs Newydd, and I was privileged to read letters from them to her in faded ink, still preserved by her descendants. I like to think of this perhaps trifling incident as a fairly long-drawn link with the past.

Llangollen is beyond all question the best gateway into North Wales for a first, or indeed for any pilgrimage through that glorious region. The North Coast route, though carrying far more passenger traffic, barely touches the spirit of the country till it approaches Conway and the easterly flanks of Snowdonia. The Breidden, to be sure, form noble sentinels, guarding as they do the passage of the Severn and the highway out of Wales into the low country of North Shropshire. Or one may go by Oswestry and dive thence into Powys-land up the valley of the Tanat and into the lands of Llanrhaiadr-y-Mochnant and Care-inion and the fair hills and dales watered by the Vyrnwy and the Banw and their tributary streams. For that matter, even by road you can climb through many gaps in that high rampart of hills which, from the Severn to the North Coast, look out over low-lying English shires, so clearly marking the course of Offa's Dyke and so significantly proclaiming the ancient border line.

But Llangollen is in every way the best entry. For here you break suddenly out of a normal English landscape of the contour and scale and general features—of the same genus, if I may use the term—as five-and-twenty English counties, and find yourself by a quick transition amid a glorious confusion of wood and cliff, of mountain and resounding, pellucid streams. In short, in altogether another land. It is not quite high-pitched enough to take the edge off any later progress through the grimmer grandeur of the Snowdon and Merioneth mountains.

For it is all of that middle elevation, from 1500 to 2000 feet, which distinguishes so much of the second best—if the term may be forgiven—of our island scenery—the Scottish borderland, on both sides, the Yorkshire dales, most of South Wales and its border counties, and the two Devonshire moors—though most of Exmoor, by the way, nearly every one forgets is in Somerset!

Hundreds of thousands of people every year, going and coming by the Great Western Railway between the South and Liverpool, may get a flitting and most beautiful glimpse up the Dee Valley into the lower end of the Vale of Llangollen, if they are sharp about it and happen to be looking out of the window at the moment—an attitude for which the rail route between Shrewsbury and Chester is not particularly encouraging. It is like a peep into another world, this flash of wild Wales thrown on to a screen for less than a minute. Indeed there are two such visions. For the Ceiriog, burrowing through the woody glens of Chirk Castle, opens for a few seconds, while a few minutes later the Dee is seen glittering through its verdant vale far below the viaduct that affords the fleeting vision. There is just time to look up the valley to where, some miles away, it seems to close in a barrier of bold hills of mountainous shape. The charming vision vanishes almost as suddenly as it has dawned, and we find ourselves among the furnaces and dump heaps of Ruabon. The alighting stranger, bound for Welsh arcadias, must have some disconcerting moments on its platform, waiting for his train, which runs hence clean through Wales, by Llangollen, Corwen, and Bala to Dolgelly and Barmouth on the West Coast—one of the most continuously beautiful stretches of traffic routes whether by road or rail, for they cling together throughout, in the kingdom.

But we are soon clear of this little patch of smirched country. The Dee far below is glittering in sinuous curves through ribbon-like meadows from rapid to salmon pool, or raging betimes between muffling woods. Flashes of foam glint through the foliage. Pleasant old bowery homesteads offer a serene and peaceful contrast, and gather further charm from the surging waters that sweep over the green carpet on which they would seem to have been planted since time began. As we sidle along the rapidly contracting vale, a stranger might well wonder how road, rail, and river are to penetrate the obstructing masses that seem to close their path ahead of us. The first rise, too, of the Berwyn range that almost bisects North Wales from east to west is climbing the sky steadily on our left, while opposing hills of weird shape upon our right seem threatening before long to reach across and tread upon the very toes of the Berwyns. In the meantime a cone-shaped hill, some thousand feet in altitude and crowned by a ruined castle, shoots up promiscuously and right in our path amid all this fine confusion. As we squeeze more readily through the gateway than the approach to it would suggest, pink limestone cliffs, springing out of hanging woods, sweep round the whole sky-line high above us to the right, while pressed down between the steep bosky slopes of the heath-crowned Berwyns and the banks of the Dee squats the ancient little town of Llangollen. Hoary age is, I am bound to say, not the leading impression it conveys. Travellers in olden days dismissed it as a "poor little town". What is left of what they saw, however, is the only approach to the quaint and picturesque left standing—if you know where to find it. But it is not worth much. No one goes, however, to Wales to see country towns, or even villages, as one goes to Shropshire or Herefordshire or Sussex or Kent, in which last counties they form no small part of the rural charm.

Modern Llangollen, then, is not beautiful, but its situation, or rather its surroundings—for I should not like to live always with an overhanging mountain between me and the sun—are divine. And that is all that matters here. Indeed the little town on its upper edges has to climb rather painfully up the feet of the overshadowing mountain, while the sacred Dee lashes its very walls on the lower side and thunders over rocky ledges in fine fury when the fountains of the hills are loosed, as they so often are in North Wales. Over all this turmoil of wide waters an ancient stone bridge of four arches carries the highway into the very heart of the town. In its day—the early fifteenth century—it was the wonder of Wales, just as the tubular and suspension bridges over the Menai were the wonder

THE EGLWYSEG CLIFFS, LLANGOLLEN

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of Mid-Victorians. It was the work of Bishop Trevor of St. Asaph—a member of that famous Border family who lorded it in these parts for centuries, and raised the war-cry of "a Trevor, a Trevor", as old Sir John Wynne of Gwydir tells us, when anything annoyed them. They are seated at Brynkinalt near by, on the Ceiriog, at this day.

Just across the bridge confronting the town, the conical hill we sighted from afar and presently passed beneath, as already told, shoots straight up, some 800 feet above the Dee, carrying on its pointed crown the splintered ruins of Dinas Brân. This ancient fortress of the Powys princes looks eastward far into England, and westward far up the folding glens of the Dee into the heart of Wales. I know no inland mediæval fortress anywhere in Great Britain so proudly and superbly placed, save perhaps Kerrig Cenin, in Carmarthenshire. But then nobody ever sees Kerrig Cenin, and the allusion is futile. It is far from all tourist tracks, and there is assuredly no motor road to it from the Vale of Towy. I once took a well-known black-and-white artist to sketch it from below. No one will believe the result to be other than a fantasy, though it is as accurate as a photograph. Dinas Brân was a Welsh outpost, held or lost by various Welsh chieftains in the old pre-Conquest wars. At one time its tributary lands reached almost to Chester at the north and to within sight of Welshpool at the south. In later and more peaceful days it seems to have fallen to the Trevors. There is not much left of it, though more than enough to proclaim this aerial pinnacle as a place that had to be reckoned with in the days of old.

It seems to rise from the centre of a vast punch-bowl, open widely to the east and but narrowly to the west, the broken floor of which heaves up and down this way and that in verdant undulations of wood and meadow, while all around rise high to heaven the encircling heights, cliff and scaur, heath and woodland, which encompass the famous vale. The dominant and pink-hued limestone cliffs, known as the Eglwyseg Rocks, falling sheer into mazy woodland depths, cut the sky-line for two or three miles on the north. Southward across the fretting river and above the town, the first easterly spring of the Berwyn range has already risen to 1500 feet, and shows in its blossoming season the purple fringe of grouse moors which overtop the woods and pastures clinging to the lower steeps.

But Dinas Brân has also its softer romance, though you might not think it, as well as its grim warlike memories. For some time in the late fourteenth century, a hundred years after the old racial wars had ceased and the bale-fires had ceased to blaze their bloody summons from its summit, another and softer light shone up there, " like a star ", according to the old bards. And this was the fair face of Myfanwy Vaughan (or Fechan), an enchanting maiden, apparently of the house of Trevor. She and her family must have been about the last occupants of this grim and inconvenient eyrie. But really all we know about her is from an impassioned ode that her charms inspired in the breast of a fairly well-known bard of that day, one Howell ap Eynion Llugui, who according to his own account was dying of love for the haughty and contemptuous beauty.

War as a theme had by then gone out of fashion with the Welsh bards for want of material, till Owen Glyndwr stirred some of them up again. They had attuned their lyres to softer themes, among which odes and sonnets to ladies were much in vogue. For the Welsh bard was not an unshaven, long-haired, elderly fanatic clad in a flowing robe, as convention is apt to paint him. He was quite as likely as not to be a young man, and very often a gentleman, clean-shaven but for a moustache and as well dressed as he could afford. He very often, too, carried a sword and we know took good care to have a saddle-horse, and was indeed rather particular about his mount. For they have told us themselves all about their tastes and requirements in the most artless fashion—at least quite enough of them have done so, to speak for the profession at large. They sang a good deal to order, to be sure—in praise of leading families or even monasteries. But what of that! They were in a sense retainers, and it was the day of patrons and feudal service. They could no longer celebrate their patron's fury in war, his " deadly blade ", and his " lion-like fury ". For if he went on the warpath it was probably in France or Scotland under the English kings, a more profitable business but quite outside

Welsh bardic traditions. So the poet celebrated his patron's cakes and ale, and very often, as I have noted, the young ladies of the country-side—on his own account, not on his employer's! For some of them were great ladies' men, as a well-dressed, well-mounted, susceptible young poet naturally would be. We hardly need their own assurance of their conquests, though some of these were no doubt apocryphal.

But Howell ap Eynion was madly in love, or thought he was, with the high-born beauty of Dinas Brân. "Amid the storms that roar around her high-perched towers he roams her form to see." His very horse, he sings, shares his infatuation, and paws the ground impatient for a start to the portals of her castle, though he does not seem ever to have effected an entrance. The vision of her radiant face, "fair as the snow new fallen on Aran's crest", destroys his sleep. She is too proud for him as she walks abroad "in scarlet robes with queenly gait, all bowing before her", and he curses his fate. But alas! she cares nothing for his lays though others think such a lot of them, or for his harp which delights all but her. Here is his last despairing note—his swan-song:

"Oh bid me sing, as well I may,
Nor scorn my melody in vain,
Or 'neath the walls of Dinas Brân
Behold me perish in my pain."

And I expect the original sounded much more fervent than this pale English rendering of it. There is little doubt, however, but that Howell soon drowned his grief at the festive board of the Abbot of Vale Crucis, of which anon, where all of his profession found a ready welcome.

It is now June, and who would not choose June for Wales that was free to do so? Since I had last lingered on the fine old bridge at Llangollen, as every one must who crosses it, oceans of water had surged through its arches. A memorial shaft at one extremity, commemorating the local heroes who had fallen in the Great War, marked most poignantly the chasm that yawned in the interval. The eternal hills, however, gave no sign, the river played the same old airs upon the rocks, the same repertoire that Myfanwy Vaughan and her love-lorn bard had listened to. But other music has come that at times almost drowns the river's voice. This used to be a quiet and serene spot, except at cattle fairs and in August, but the hoot of the motor has changed everything. Seldom does a big salmon river beat against the very streets of a country town. But when the Dee is in flood it is a great sight from its windows, and above all from the bridge. And it was in half-flood now, though in the driest of the twelve months. Amber-tinted in normal times as are its clear waters, the sacred river, for such the Dwrfdwy has ever been accounted since Arthur's time, is coming down in spate a fine dark mahogany, redolent of the peat mosses in a hundred mountain glens.

When the white horses are blowing down Bala Lake from the south-west into the out-flowing Dee: when the Treweryn is bringing its burden of fresh waters from the wilds of Arenig, the Ceidiog from the glens of Llandrillo and the Alwen and Geirw from the uplands of Cerrig-y-Druidion, with many another stream less known to fame, Bishop Trevor's bridge, which has stood the racket of it all for five centuries, is a choice vantage point. What countless victims of the river's fury in all these years have been barged against its stout piers, or sucked through its arches, who shall say. Corpses of men and beasts, barns and roof-trees, wagons and wooden bridges galore, have all in their day been swept down the green Vale of Edeyrnion and buffeted through the rocky gorges of Glyndyfrdwy and Llantisilio. The backs of the outside houses in the town stand with their very feet in the water when it is low, and it is strange to see the flood beating half-way up the back wall of the old "Royal Hotel", which withstands the torrent's rage as complacently as if it were a granite cliff. It is not, by the way, quite a blank wall. For there is a bow window, high up in it, which to this day I never behold, even from a passing train, without a shudder. It belongs, or belonged, to the coffee-room. It was no doubt accounted a privilege by guests to have a table set against it in summer and look down on the trout rising in the surface of the river as it ripples away into the sylvan shades below.

It was not summer, however, on this dread occasion, but early April some thirty years ago. I had come down fishing in a coracle from Llansaintffraid bridge, eight miles upstream, and was having my dinner in that window, while waiting for a train back. The hotel was apparently empty but for a smart-looking young couple, quite obviously honeymooners. We were put to dine together at a longish table in this privileged point of observation, my place being thoughtfully laid by the waiter at one extremity, while the loving pair were discreetly seated at the other. This three-cornered feast had not gone far, in fact my soup plate had just been removed, when, inadvertently or otherwise, I happened to lean both my elbows on the table. Then a dreadful thing happened. For the table proved to be contrived of loose boards laid on trestles, and up went the other end, that of the bridal feast! The soup tureen and a water jug, I remember, turned a somersault, and various minor vessels that in the great deluge escaped notice. The trousseau frock was a sight for the gods. The bridegroom's trousers seemed hardly to matter in the general ruin. There was nothing to be said: it was a tragedy, the event of the honeymoon, no doubt, and related peradventure to children and possibly grandchildren to this day. For myself, I was glad when the time came to get into my train!

The old " Royal Hotel ", once the " King's Head ", though much modernized, with its rival the " Hand " has seen great days and great folk enough since Telford's road to Holyhead was opened, more than a hundred years ago. For half a century almost every one of note who passed between London and Dublin sampled the accommodation of one or the other, or at the least toasted their toes at their hearths or maybe loitered on Bishop Trevor's bridge while the coach changed horses. Many still living can easily remember when there was no railroad beyond Ruabon, when the coach still ran through Llangollen to the coast and, save for the North Shore route, there was not a railway in North Wales. The Church of St. Collen, which saint in dim ages sponsored the town, has little but its years to call for attention. There is a monument, however, in the churchyard over the graves of those two irrepressible exotics on the pages of Llangollen history, the two old

Irish ladies and their faithful domestic. And here am I again, like everybody else, talking about them. Indeed Plâs-Newydd, the half-timbered, highly decorative residence which they practically built and filled with treasures, is almost the only noteworthy building in the place. But apart from that and the personality of these funny old things who held Llangollen in their grip and under their spell for half a century, the rooms of Plâs-Newydd have memories of many famous persons who visited its eccentric owners.

These last, Lady Emily Butler and Miss Ponsonby, to wit, members of two great ruling Irish houses of that day, for some obscure reason in the year of our Lord 1776 abjured their country and its society, and after looking about a bit, settled in the then secluded village of Llangollen. What was still more remarkable, they never again emerged from it. For they were not *religieuses*, or there would have been nothing odd about the business. They professed to be weary of the pomps and vanities of the great world—in their case the brilliant, rollicking, superficial, pre-Union Irish world—and anxious to prove that the ties of friendship were the true source of all human happiness. Lady Emily Butler, who was nearly forty, may have been able to take a detached, old-maid point of view, but this abnegation seems a little premature for her friend, who was more than ten years younger. At any rate they concealed themselves successfully from all their fashionable friends in this Arcadian hollow, and lost all touch with the world till it was brought again to their doors by Telford's famous road some thirty years later. But for nearly half a century this eccentric but slightly imperious pair ruled the " poor little town " of Llangollen with a benignant coals-and-blanket sway. And we may guess what that amounted to with two old ladies who wore men's hats and coats and carried riding-whips, though not for a moment is it suggested that they used these last on the native back! But when the stream of through traffic to Ireland set that way, the seclusion of these veterans came to an end, though they never themselves stirred out of it. They became lions—or rather lionesses—and cultivated passing lions and even occasional lionesses, for the brilliant and clever Lady Morgan tells us how she spent a couple of days with them *en route* from Dublin to London.

It became the thing for every one of consequence who tarried at the "Hand" or the "Black Lion", to pay their respects to Plâs-Newydd, though one of these houses of entertainment was under their special ban for some reason. The old ladies got huffy if this obvious duty was overlooked. The Duke of Wellington was a frequent guest, but then he was related to Brynkinalt. Scott and Wordsworth were there once, at least. But the Rydal bard in a well-known sonnet offended them deeply by describing Plâs-Newydd as "a humble cot by Deva's banks". It certainly was rather a silly bit of poetic licence. So much for the couple whom society in London and Dublin came to talk about as one of the world's minor wonders. At any rate Llangollen canonized them, to the ousting of the fair Myfanwy, the last lady of distinction, so far as I know, to shine there, and in her own haughty fashion too, no doubt! They became its *genii loci* for all time, and occupy a foremost position in its tourist literature. They would seem, however, to have found their way, on one occasion at least, to the playhouse at Oswestry. For Mathews, whose reputation had no doubt drawn them thither, tells us he was so staggered at the appearance of these two "old gentlemen", which for the moment he mistook them for, in the audience, that he could scarcely control his mirth sufficiently to go on with his part. Plâs-Newydd, a gabled house in the black-and-white style, which stands in its own grounds and was nearly all built by the ladies, is certainly worth a visit even now. Its owners had filled it with all manner of curios, which at their death were dispersed by a great auction sale. When I first knew it, General Yorke—a connexion, I think, of the old ladies—owned the house, which was full of old oak—mostly, I fancy, of his own collecting—and had turned it into a sort of museum of curiosities. He used to live at the "Hand", but was at the Plâs every day, acting himself as custodian and showman to all and sundry. It was his hobby. At the General's death, it became a private residence.

But of all the works of bygone hands around Llangollen, the remains of Vale Crucis, otherwise Llangwestle Abbey, is by far the most alluring, and for charm of setting and environment has no equal of its class in Wales. In truth the past of Wales is expressed much more vividly in its castles than its abbeys, partly from the fact that Owen Glyndwr in his ten years of strife destroyed so many of them. I had not seen the abbey for over twenty years, but for all that time a charming sketch of it by a famous black-and-white artist had hung over my chimneypiece, and I was keen enough to revisit it. Moreover, I was able to introduce it to a party of friends who came over from their home away beyond the Berwyns and had never seen it, greatly adding thereby to the pleasure of the day, which luckily in an untoward summer proved all that could be desired. It is a delightful walk from Llangollen of about two miles, the first half of which runs lifted up above the north bank of the Dee. Here you may follow, if you choose, the shady tow-path of a canal, which sounds prosaic but is in fact by no means so, for the said canal—of which anon—is more like a broad mill-stream, being filled to its grassy brim with pellucid water from the Dee. A few pleasant villas strung along the road above its bank suggest the fact that Llangollen, ever since the railroad reached it, has been in a limited way a place of abode for persons of strong hearts, let us hope, and stout legs, fond of sport or mostly perhaps of uplifting scenery. Good heavens, what a run there would be on it if the physical structure of this island admitted of there being such a scene within fifty miles of London! But probably few Londoners have ever heard of it.

For a time the brown Dee churns in turmoil below, now between open banks, now between screening foliage, while the steep foot-hills press close on our right hand; beyond the river, the Berwyn heights, with their green and woody flanks, climb the sky. In a mile or so a glen opens out to the river and lets in the modest tribute of the Brân, from which stream perhaps the high-perched castle took its name. Following up its lively course along the Ruthin road for half a mile or so, the ruins of the Cistercian abbey soon break into view, charmingly set in a fair meadow with a background of ancient trees. While the encircling mountains, from the shiny cliffs of Eglwyseg to the pointed crown of Moel Gamelyn, mount the sky behind—in truth a rare vision of beauty and ancient peace.

It was in the winter of 1201 that Madoc ap Gryffydd, Lord of Powys fadog, laid the foundations of this monastery, as the contemporary accounts have it, "in the Vale of the Pillar of Eliseg", otherwise in Glyn-y-Groes, the Valley of the Cross. It was just then a season of great zeal in church building, and Madoc introduced the Cistercians as skilful sheep-farmers, and for that reason perhaps the favourite order in Wales, into his new foundation. It was a moment, too, when the Welsh leaders were making their last effort to shake off the domination of Canterbury, which was in many ways oppressive. The indomitable Archdeacon and historian, Giraldus Cambrensis, was carrying on his agitation for an Archbishopric of St. David's, with a canny eye to it himself, supported by Llewelyn the Great, then all-powerful in Wales, together with other big men, Madoc among them. But a direct petition to the Pope, that they had forwarded, had failed, Henry II and Canterbury remaining obdurate.

The lands of Madoc, we are told, then stretched all the way from the Tanat beyond the Berwyns to the outskirts of Chester. He was in truth a very potent chief, and the right hand all his life of Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, the greatest prince in mediæval Welsh history. Madoc lived for thirty-six years after the founding of his beautiful abbey church in Vale Crucis, and was laid to rest beneath its stately Gothic aisles. But, with the fatal habit of his nation, he split up his broad lands between his four sons, and the inevitable period of turmoil ensued before the survival of the fittest, or at least of the strongest, settled the question of who was to lead the men of Powys fadog into the next scrap with English or Welsh. For the Powys chieftains, from the exigencies of their geographical position, were not always Welsh patriots.

The west wall of the abbey still survives, displaying three Decorated windows and a circular one, which still retains its tracery, in the gable above. Part of the chancel wall, too, is yet standing, and a portion of the south transept. The monastic buildings, extending at right angles from the south side of the church, and for a long period occupied as a farmhouse, have been these many years since rescued from that indignity and retain much of their original form, while the chapter-house has been cleared of all extraneous litter. The whole formed an exquisite picture as we approached it, the old grey walls lit up by a westering sun. The verdure of the crisp turf with which centuries of showers and dew have clad the vanished pavements, seemed fresher than ever in this and the surrounding precincts; the lofty trees where a time-honoured rookery contributes with its clamour to the sense of an old abiding-place were still intact, and always near by was the quieter murmur of the stream. The whole scene, too, with the overhanging mountains, dominated by the shapely peak of Moel Gamelyn for a background, is on a calm and sunny day a truly exquisite one. Many coffin-lids of abbots and monks have been saved and exposed to view, but the tombs of the Powys chieftains who were laid here, including that of the founder, have vanished and the place of their sepulture is unknown. They were great sheep-farmers, these Cistercians. There were eight or nine of their monasteries in Wales by the thirteenth century, and, by the taxation returns of that day, they owned between them about 30,000 sheep. They were the true founders of the flannel industry which later on developed so widely in Wales. That of Llangollen, which still, though feebly, survives, traces back to these old monks of Vale Crucis.

The custodianship of the abbey would appear to be hereditary. When I used to come here thirty to forty years ago, it was in charge of an amazingly diminutive Welsh parson, who with his wife lived, by day at any rate, on the premises. He was quite a character, but was so enthusiastically wrapt up in the building and all pertaining to it that one checked any desire to be amused at the lighter side of the situation. On inquiring of the young man who the other day opened the big entrance gates for us and took our sixpences and subsequently acted as cicerone, I found not unnaturally that he had been dead many years but that he, the speaker, was his son. An aged lady seated knitting upon the grass-grown aisles turned out to be the widow of our old friend. The sacristy and the slype are still fairly perfect, but the huge dormitory of the monks is very much so, and in it have been collected several of the coffin-lids and memorials of the notables whose dust lies beneath the turf. Those of Myfanwy Vaughan and Iolo Goch, Glyndwr's bard, who were both buried here, I need hardly say, have no place. I was sorry to find that the large fish-pond which formerly spread under the walls and reflected the ruins most beautifully on its limpid surface, had shrunk into a reedy swamp.

There was not much left of the rigid asceticism of the Cistercians by the fifteenth or even the fourteenth century. Another bard of the former period and of some repute, one Guttyn Owain, has left us an enthusiastic account, from his own point of view, of this lapse from grace. " Every day ", says he, " the abbot provides a new feast and with such free hospitality that it might be perpetual Christmas at Llangwestle." He, at any rate, for his part won't fail to turn up, and that too in good time ! On another occasion Guttyn seems to have been rather nervous about the expected invitation. For, having extolled the wine provided by the abbot as equal to any drunk by kings or barons, he reminds him that he is his nephew and a true chip of the old block, and thoroughly capable of appreciating all these good things. All this is quite humourous, but the cheer-loving poet wrote a great deal too about love and women. And furthermore, Welsh scholars are not a little indebted to him for much information concerning many of the leading families and life generally in his day. After all, if the Welsh bard eulogized the families who patronized him, English poets of even the eighteenth century could hardly throw a stone at him on that account !

The carved pillar of Eliseg stands a little way up the valley in a small grove near a farmhouse, and is some five hundred years older than the abbey to which it gave a name. It is now only some six feet high, while the cross which once surmounted it has long vanished—yet more, the pillar itself was knocked off its pedestal by Cromwellian fanatics in the Civil Wars, to be subsequently replaced. The inscription, now illegible, was fortunately transcribed by an eighteenth-century antiquary and is one of the earliest with regular lettering in Britain. It describes the pillar as erected to Elise or Eliseg, who flourished in the middle of the eighth century, apparently waged successful war against the Saxons, and was probably Lord of Dinas Brân. The road to the abbey and pillar pushes on upward, and at no great distance crosses the high shoulder of the mountain range into the secluded upland valley of Bryn-Eglwys and the heart of Yale. It is an easy matter by this or other ways to climb the pointed peak of Moel Gamelyn, just under 2000 feet, or its neighbour, Moel Morfydd, a little lower but affording perhaps a still more unimpeded view. My former experiences of these two summits went back to spring days in the 'eighties and 'nineties, when green splashes of sycamore and larch almost alone lit up the still brown woods of oak and ash which clothed and, despite the war, still clothe the lower hillsides. Vast, however, as is the outlook, ranging from the Snowdon mountains to the Shropshire Wrekin, the lovely sweep of the Dee, when sparkling and foaming amid the June foliage around its wide horseshoe curves below, is, I think, the gem of it all. But there are all kinds of easy walks and mild climbs around Llangollen, over mountain tracks or by leafy ways, from which this gorgeous vale may be enjoyed from a score of diverse vantage-points.

CHAPTER II

"THE WORLD'S END"

IT was a beautiful evening after a rainy day, that we set out from the Corwen country to renew acquaintance with this woodland lair of the ancient Princes of Powys, historically known as Plâs-Cadwgan or Plâs Eglwyseg—popularly as "The World's End". My hostess had vague girlish memories of a bicycle ride there over half-forgotten tracks, in which the machine seems to have been abandoned as superfluous long before reaching the goal. My own were more remote still and almost ante-dated the very existence of those invaluable and now almost discarded aids to intimacy with a countryside. A tremendous expedition too this seemed in the long ago from this same Corwen neighbourhood, greatly labouring in a big wagonette and pair, with a cheerful party and picnic hampers. But it was my sole contribution on the vital question of transit. A Ford car was our present method of progress on this, as on many expeditions. Now I know absolutely nothing about motor-cars. All the activities of my life, which have been not inconsiderable, have been achieved by the various means then available, horseback, cycle, or legs. And at the risk of seeming ungrateful to many friends in many places who in recent years have made some enterprises easy that would have otherwise been difficult, I can never be thankful enough that most of my active life was passed before petrol took possession of the roads, when the sense of effort and variety flavoured all our comings and goings, for which I think we were none the worse, and when the land at large was at peace. Having uttered this egregious heresy, I will hasten to say that a constitutional aversion to machinery, or rather perhaps a hopelessly unmechanical temperament, doesn't prevent my admiration for the skill and courage of some of my friends in Wales, male and female, who will face with equanimity lines of country which are outside the experience of most south-country motorists.

The Llangollen authorities on roads seemed to know very little about that to " The World's End ". Some said they believed it to be quite passable, others thought we might have serious trouble. It was obviously not patronized by tourists! Octavia, my hostess, was quite a good driver and held what may be called a Welsh degree in the art which I should adjudge to be equivalent to " taking honours ". Her chauffeur, Myfanwy, a young lady from the Vale of Clwyd, had been in the Army during the war, and had driven soldiers in a hurry of every degree from generals to Tommies, by night and day, over every sort of road and in every kind of country. I think she would have driven over the top of Snowdon in the middle of the night without turning a hair. So that was all right. Moreover, she could speak her native language fluently and colloquially, a useful accomplishment I need hardly say on many occasions on the by-roads of Wales. And concerning this same Cwmraig tongue, she had a very good story to tell of a quite recent experience, when she was driving a couple of Welsh savants, whose names are widely known. They were on an official tour as members of the Ancient Monuments Commission, and it was somewhere between Barmouth and Harlech that they met a young man on a motor-cycle, who pulled up sharply and signalled for them to do likewise. This merely signified that he had run out of oil, and in coming forward to make his request for assistance he found some difficulty with his English. On the Welsh antiquaries answering promptly in his native tongue that they would willingly serve him, the rustic youth seemed absolutely staggered and much relieved. " Why," said he, with a radiant expression, " I took you for *gentlemen* ! " This was delicious, the trio in the car screamed with laughter, and one of them addressing the disconcerted youth, remarked: " Well, mayn't a gentleman be able to speak Welsh ? " " Oh, yes, I suppose so, but you don't look that sort of gentleman ", blundered on the young man, and left the party feeling they had been well repaid for the petrol. Perhaps the humour of the situation will best come home to Welshmen.

Another experience of our young friend, though, unlike the first, irrelevant to our subject and concerned with the war, will perhaps justify its inclusion and have a wider appeal. Her corps of motorists were at the moment quartered in Liverpool. The American troops were just arriving in England, and one of their colonels had come on in advance to the great Lancashire port on some special duty. An order reached the girls' headquarters for a car to be placed at his disposal at the " Adelphi Hotel " at 10.30 sharp the next morning. The young woman dispatched on the job arrived three minutes late, which the American, pulling out his watch, remarked upon in a fashion that seemed needlessly offensive to the fair chauffeur. Whereupon, and, very improperly no doubt, she retorted with some heat: " Three *minutes*, sir. Why, that's nothing—you are three years late ". Whether the audacious minx was reprimanded for her cheek didn't transpire, but that she became the heroine of the hour in her regiment and outside it was natural enough.

So crossing Bishop Trevor's bridge at Llangollen, with the Dee foaming beneath it in a half-spate, we headed north through the broken low country for the encircling heights beyond, for whose inner recesses we were bound. The sun shone out most gloriously. The frequent rains that fell I fancy everywhere throughout this summer, had left Wales more radiant during the intermittent days and hours of sunshine than I have ever seen it. I shall never forget the leisurely seven miles' drive and the scenes which that evening sun illumined. We took our time over it, partly because it was impossible not to linger over them even in a car, and partly that the lanes to be traversed had the flavour of experiment, always narrow, often perpendicular, tortuous and sharp-cornered, occasionally grass-grown and impeded with the wandering boughs of lush-encroaching hedgerows. All this was a trifle to such drivers as I cheerfully entrusted myself with in many worse places. Moreover, a Ford car, though not popular with millionaires, is, I am credibly informed, the most to be relied on in tight places and rough countries. At any rate this one responded nobly on several occasions in that season of storms and fitful sunshine and marvellous effects, when only the dauntless bearing of my fair companions, in whose hands I was, enabled me to assume a tolerably bold face. Indeed, what else could I do under the circumstances? Our only anxiety on this occasion was the prospect of encountering other vehicles. Happily the few small farmers by the way were all safe and snug at home, and we were not called upon to solve a problem that appeared to be insoluble.

High in air upon our right—1000 to 1500 feet above us—hung the long array of the Eglwyseg cliffs, their limestone steeps shining, now white, and now a tender pink, in the full light of the westering sun. For some three or four miles drawing ever closer to us, they displayed a long succession of sheer precipice, or of broken, turf-ribbed buttress, dropping into steep skirts of verdant sheep pastures, or hiding their feet in a maze of tangled woods. All aglow in the rarified storm-cleared air, they shone with an almost unearthly radiancy. Small whitewashed homesteads with grey roofs, in orchard settings, gleamed sparsely here and there amid the vivid greenery of this broken foreground. Away on our left loomed the bold ridge of the Fron, which divided our valley from that of the Brân and Vale Crucis to the westward. Everywhere the land was alive with bubbling waters. Little rivulets sang in the hollows of cuppy meadows or hurried down alder glades upon their tortuous and bosky journey to the Dee. As converging hill and cliff began to shut us in more closely on either side, we struck the head waters of the Brân, as it left our valley by a gorge for the adjoining one of the Eliseg. Its infant stream now kept us merry company through woodland ways, till a meadow or two opening out before us exposed to view the ancient manor-house of the Cromwellian regicide—for as such the luckless Colonel Jones figured and suffered.

Tucked under the woody barrier that behind it effectually closes up the head of the narrow glen, the half-timbered, lattice-windowed, flag-roofed Tudor house makes a picture as bewitching as it is unexpected, in such a wild sylvan nook. Though but seven miles in measurement from Llangollen, one accepts for once in a way as not infelicitous the rather commonplace, local pseudonym of "The World's End". Anything more profoundly and serenely aloof from all echoes of the outer world would be hard to find lying within the bounds of everyday life. But it is the sylvan beauty of the scene combined with the charm of the old house, planted so strangely in its midst for this three or four centuries past, that makes for its unique appeal. For this is no mere ruinous, tumbledown farmhouse of interesting origin, nor again a gentleman's seat with all its modern surroundings and accessories thus dropped in the wild. It is simply a perfect specimen of a gabled Tudor manor-house set with some dignity upon a small terraced lawn, outside of which narrow limits rugged nature has it much its own way. Narrow glades of sheep pasture, intermingling with birch, pine and hazel copse, while oak, ash, and chestnut trees shade its precincts. Hanging woods rise sharply upon one side, upon the other the shining limestone crags of Craig Aderyn and Craig Arthur tower some 1500 feet above.

The old house with its fairly numerous and, for its style, quite spacious and panelled rooms, is in admirable repair. This Welsh squire of the seventeenth century might have considered himself fortunate in possessing such a home, particularly as an alternative to his older seat at Maes-y-Garnedd. It is odd that this Puritan firebrand in a Royalist district should have owned two of the most sequestered manor-houses in Wales: this one here, tucked away in forest glens, and Maes-y-Garnedd in the open wilds of the Ardudwy mountains, called by the guide-books with sufficient justice "the loneliest farmhouse in Wales". For the Colonel[1] was by no means himself fond of seclusion or of hiding his light under a bushel. In truth he made himself so busy in his brother-in-law's cause that, outliving the Restoration, he suffered the extreme penalty. "I have just met the smoking quarters of Colonel Jones being carried away from execution", writes Pepys. The house has been long stripped of the family relics and old curios that adorned it when I was last here. An original painting of Cromwell by Lely, and one of the Protector's mother, besides arms, accoutrements, tankards, and other relics of the period, are what I chiefly remember.

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[1] He was Cromwell's brother-in-law.

The house, however, is clean, sound, and in good repair. It is now occupied by a young farmer and his wife, tenants of Sir Watkin Wynne, the present owner, and a thousand acres of the rough Arcady surrounding it supports a few hundred sheep and a bunch of cows which last were coming down to the milking as we arrived. The rooms were in process of being simply furnished, for the occupation of any half-dozen souls who should feel moved by the spirit of the place to forget the world and test its sylvan solitudes—though the landlady did not put it in such romantic phrase. I can only say that if there are any people like this nowadays, I have never seen in all my wanderings such an ideal harbourage of the kind. If any further touch were wanting amid this woodland silence, broken only by the plash of the mountain stream beneath the lawn, or the note of thrush and cushat from the grove, the visitor may read carved in stone above the door: "This manor of Eglwyseg was inherited by the Princes of Powys from Bleddyn ap Cynvyn, King of North Wales, who fell in battle 1073". Below is the shield of the Pendragon and the words "Ovna na ovno angan", which being interpreted signify "Neither cowardice, nor fear of death". If this inscription be somewhat cryptic to almost every one but a few Welshmen, the very mystery of it will probably harmonize well enough with the mood of the properly constituted pilgrim to this retreat.

But he may learn a great deal more than this, if he cares to. For the spot was associated in the twelfth century with one of the most dramatic and stormiest incidents in Welsh history, namely, the abduction of Nesta, the daughter of Rhys ap Tudor of the South Welsh royal house, by Owain, the heady son of Cadwgan, Prince of Powys. It was to this forest lair, then a hunting seat of the Powys princes, that tradition has it he brought her—the "Helen of Wales", the fairest lady of her day. She had been a ward and rather more than a ward to Henry I, for she had a son by him, who then married her to his favourite, Gerald de Windsor, Constable of Pembroke. Now it so happened that Cadwgan, the father of the culprit Owain, besides his Powys possessions was also for the time Lord of Ceredigion, or Cardiganshire. At the moment he was holding high festival there at Aber-Teify, the present Cardigan, and his sons, including the headstrong and uncontrollable Owain, were with him. All Wales for a wonder was just then at peace, and yet more, Cadwgan was on admirable terms with the King. But the radiant beauty of Nesta had been so blazed abroad that Owain's curiosity was piqued and he took a trip into Pembrokeshire to inspect the lady, which was in no way out of order since she was a cousin.

Yet it proved a fatal visit. For, inflamed by the sight of her charms, the headstrong youth determined, then and there, to carry her off from her husband. So collecting a score of followers as reckless as himself, including it seems his brother, they dug their way by night under the closed gates of Gerald's castle, probably Pembroke, set fire to it, and in the confusion carried off Nesta and her two children; her husband escaping down a drain to have his revenge many years later. Tradition has it that Owain then brought his captive hot-foot across Wales to this hunting seat of his in Powys. The fat was now in the fire. The King was furious, all Wales was in a blaze. Poor Cadwgan could do nothing with his reckless son, though he had to bear the brunt of the King's wrath. For Owain, despite all his father's threats and entreaties, held fast to his prize, whether wholly against her will we may not know, though he sent her children back to their father. Why he took them at all is not very evident. All the daws now pecked at the hapless Cadwgan. He was driven out of Ceredigion and his territory wasted by neighbouring chiefs, and out of Powys by others who were granted his lands by the King for such militant service: while Owain, the whole cause of the uproar, fled to Ireland.

The lady in the meantime found her way back to Pembroke, her husband and children, to figure in history as the mother and grandmother of many of those Norman Welsh knights who helped Strongbow to the first conquest of Ireland. Cadwgan was subsequently pardoned by the King, a sorry jest, poor man, unless as the begetter of a firebrand, and sent to live on his

Norman wife's property over the English border. But the intervening years had been a chaos of battle, fire, slaughter, and shifting of territory. Cadwgan had been twice restored to Powys and Cardigan, but each time his impossible son had upset the apple-cart and thrown everything again into the melting-pot. That the wicked proverbially flourish is well illustrated by the surprising spectacle of Owain reigning eventually and for years in peace over his hereditary domains in Powys. He even served with the King in Normandy and was there knighted by him.

Justice, however, was not to be quite baulked. Gerald de Windsor had not forgotten him. For it so happened that he and Owain found themselves both serving the Crown against a rising in South Wales, and on the first convenient occasion that served for such an outside piece of business, Gerald and his people set upon Owain and shot him to death with arrows. His long-suffering parent had already been slain in a private feud at Welshpool. And all this hurly-burly had arisen through the charms of a single lady, who doubtless had done nothing worse than flick a flirtatious and cousinly eye on Owain ap Cadwgan. If so, she must have paid for it, poor soul, in Owain's sketchy hunting lodge up here at the end of the world. She must have sorely wearied of the song of the birds and the music of the stream, to say nothing of the howling of the wolves which then infested Powys. So wagged the world of Wales in the twelfth century.

Just behind the house a steep path leads up through the wood above the Brân, which leaping down from its high source forms just here a picturesque and quite resounding little cataract. An upright stone beside the woodland trail proclaims the pious faith of some former owner that this was the actual path by which Owain the heady son of Cadwgan went out on those reckless exploits that set all Wales aflame. So far as our valley was concerned, the sun had now set, it was full time to be off. Our farmer, too, had told us of another way of egress from the glen. He didn't think the road was any worse than the one we had come by, though as the owner only of a farm trap, his opinion didn't strike me as authoritative. But I was a cipher, though a willing one, a mere fatalist, which is much the best thing to be if you know nothing about cars. It saves you many anxious moments (in Wales) and many unpleasant thrills, at any rate in theory.

But the ladies seemed to clutch at the idea of a fresh experiment, so away we went again, fortunate in having the first mile of our old road to ourselves, though a couple of farm lads on foot had to screw themselves half up the fence to let us pass. We were, in fact, to turn off the old road with the course of the Brân, a mile down, drive through the yard of the first farmhouse, which on reaching it looked both old and interesting, and climb up the hill behind by a lane. This scramble achieved, the way presented, we were told, no further difficulties save for being rather narrow, and traversing without any protection the side of a mountain. However, this seemed all right so far as my guardian angels were concerned. But on emerging from the farmyard gates and scaling the short, sharp, curving pitch of rough lane beyond it, with some protests even from the Ford as must be admitted, it struck a really bad patch, literally and metaphorically. For the patch was one of fresh wet clay, recently flung there by some absent-minded agriculturist concerned only with prehistoric modes of transport, on which the tyres absolutely refused to bite. So there we were ! Still, too, in the mazy wilderness of Owain ap Cadwgan, over which twilight was beginning to throw what seemed to our disenchanted eyes its gloomy and threatening pall. On one side was a precipitous drop to which some scattered pine trees clung precariously : on the other, an upright bank. The lane, too, was climbing in a nasty curve and was rough, soft, and slippery of surface from recent rains.

I am no judge, to be sure, but the normal way of escape from this impasse, namely, to run backwards down the steep curving hill to the farmyard and the other route, seemed to my untutored eyes a perilous job enough. Our dauntless young chauffeur thought so too, though she didn't say so, or look like it. But she went so far afterwards as to admit that she wasn't sorry that the necessity hadn't arisen, and I knew what that meant. But we had a long struggle with that beastly little patch of slippery clay only a yard or two wide. We laid old newspapers and scraps of rag from the car's stores in front of the wheels, but that was useless. We carried hardly won stones from the soft clay bank to make a surface for the wheels to grip, but the stones went backwards in the mud with the wheels. It was really beginning to look hopeless, when of a sudden the struggling wheels got a momentary grip of some wretched fragment of the oddments we had flung into the rut ; at least, I suppose so, and with a groan the car lurched forward on to firmer ground, and with a shout of triumph from its driver sped at best pace up the slope, lest other like treacherous patches should be lurking around to our undoing. We two others sped after it with light foot and heartfelt expressions of relief, for we had really been in a tighter fix than this brief and bald narrative might suggest.

It was still light enough as we edged along the unfenced lane which rimmed the mountain side for two or three miles to admire the beauty of the deep lateral vale through which the Brân far below was urging its impetuous course along a meadowy trough. Above it, between us and Llangollen, rose the isolated and partly wooded mass of the Fron, while as we headed for the valley of Eliseg and its arterial highway, descending from the uplands of Yale, the shapely heights of Moel Gamelyn and her satellites rose dark against the western sky. The drop down here to this main road from Ruthin and the Vale of Clwyd, though by a fenced lane, was a prodigiously steep one, and I believe had recently been the death of some motorists. But as we turned left-handed into the main road and soon passed the Abbey, now ghostly grey against its dark rookery, we were only some fifteen miles from home. And of the Holyhead road from Llangollen to Corwen at night, beautiful as it is by day, there is nothing to say or to take note of, except the flashing headlights of its ceaseless motor traffic.

Yet I can remember this road when a dog might almost have slumbered the clock round upon its very crown ! It was in those dim days, too, the favourite spot for timid locals to make their first ventures on a safety bicycle, as the surface still retained the perfection of Telford's work, and there was hardly any traffic. Indeed, it is associated with my own earliest journeys of blessed memory, when we all thought we were the last word in road travel and were even helping to keep many of the historic highways from becoming grass-grown and their houses of entertainment from falling into decay. Which indeed was true. The Holyhead road was in truth then looked on as a sort of historic relic ; the sentiment of the old coaching period lay thick upon it. The single line of railway which traversed, and still traverses, the meadows and the woody mazes of the Dee valley close beside it represented to us of those days the supplanter of the road about which the romance of old times still lingered. The latter, though still the main artery of local wheel traffic, was so lightly regarded that its surface for some dozen miles beyond Corwen, westward, was allowed to be entirely destroyed by a steam-traction car that traversed it daily for years on its own account without protest, and made so much of Telford's fine work virtually a ruin for a decade or more, as many of us remember only too well. One wonders what Telford would say now if he could see its polished tarred surface and the lightning traffic that streams along it from a score of counties. For that matter, what would the builders of this railroad think of the despised highway they had put out of action now rivalling its trains in passenger traffic and dashing contemptuously by them as they take their enforced ease at the country stations. Yet I sometimes wonder if all this is to the good, and precisely what these breathless thousands and what the country generally gets out of it all, except speed. Whether, apart from other things and the discouragement of the old activities, the price is not too high a one to pay for the elimination of the horse and the part it had played for centuries in country life—nay, in family life. At any rate, few people seem to walk nowadays, even among these enchanting hills.

I was standing one gorgeous afternoon following, like so many this summer, on a wet morning, at a high vantage point on the Holyhead road between Llangollen and Glyndyfrdwy. For just where the road climbs over the base of that bold and woody spur of the Berwyns, popularly known as Barber's Hill, and as it begins to descend again and for good into the Dee valley, it commands one of the finest valley and river views in all Wales. It was a veritable fairy scene on this brilliant July evening—the June, in fact, of normal seasons. For many hundred feet below, its foaming rapids fairly flashing in the sunlight, the Dee was surging down the long straight reach from Glyndyfrdwy, cleaving its bright way through masses of lush unbroken woodland, radiant just then beyond compare in the freshness of their foliage under the light of the slanting sun. Then, turning almost at a right angle immediately beneath us, it hurries away on the great horseshoe curve it here describes to open another and further glorious vista downstream, gliding betimes in woodland or sparkling round the open fringe of green pastures, to the now surf-lashed rocks, the birch and hazel thickets, of Rhiwl.

And everywhere behind this wide, entrancing foreground rose sheer out of it all the Gamelyn mountains—their shapely fronts and flanks verdant as velvet, their sharp and heathy summits all but ready to don their purple caps. A couple of young women, with wallets and staffs, evidently, and for a wonder, on a walking tour, hung upon the fence near by obviously, from their continued silence, as well they may have been, enthralled by the vision which opens suddenly from the belt of trees that elsewhere lines the road. During the half-hour I may have lingered here, some thirty or forty private cars passed me, within a few yards and in full view, if they had turned their heads, of the prospect spread beneath—some going slowly up the hill, others whirling down it. I had the cusiosity to take note of each one of them, great and small. Not a single passenger bestowed as much as even a sidelong glance. Each and all of them were quite obviously unconscious that there was anything at all to be seen, though the very contour of the country and the course of the road should have suggested to a blind man there was something to look out for, even if he couldn't see it. I couldn't help wondering what all those people, other of course than the occasional locals, were at! Why they consumed so much extra petrol, and perhaps took bigger risks in these mountain countries, when hundreds of miles of level or undulating highway were open to them over three parts of England! Since writing this, I see that Mr. Baddeley, who must have spent much of his life investigating the best parts of this island, considers the view from this hill that I have been endeavouring to describe, the finest valley view in Britain. Mr. Ruskin, though a Lakelander, was of much the same opinion. But not a single motorist out of forty cast so much as an eye on it. Again, what were they here for?

The whole road to Corwen, for that matter, though it drops here to the level of the Dee, and indeed right on to Bala, is striking enough. For the valley is narrow, scarce half a mile wide, for the most part. The folds of the Berwyns dominate it on the left, always luxuriant in their lower slopes, with a wild and broken sky-line, all aflame in August with the heather-bloom. Along the north of the Vale successive but rather less lofty hills run boldly up, shaking themselves free in their ascent of the climbing tracery of valley hedgerow and homestead, and culminating in crowns of rugged rock.

CHAPTER III

GLYNDYFRDWY AND CORWEN

GEORGE BORROW started his famous tour in Wales at Llangollen. I use the epithet because of the fame of the author of " L'Avengro ", " The Romany Rye ", and " The Bible in Spain ". I am not sure that a great many people have read his " Wild Tales ". I have known it well myself this forty years past, but there are reasons for that. Though it stands and is quoted as a classic, I have encountered but few in England who have actually read it, though that may be an accident. Many Welshmen know it, but they would hardly be human if they took it very seriously apart from the whimsicalities of Borrow himself and his unconventional charm of style. I myself came across it quite fortuitously in the interlude when Borrow had been forgotten and not yet re-discovered. The present Borrovian cult had not arisen. Norwich had forgotten all about him, though he was articled there for years, as it so happens, to my wife's grandfather and his partner, of whom he has so much to say that is pleasant in the beginning of " L'Avengro ", and again and again in " Wild Wales ".

But these old lawyers and Norwich worthies of the post-Waterloo period would have been properly surprised to have been told that some day literary lights from London and America would gather in the Town Hall and elsewhere to do honour to the memory of their idle and impracticable clerk. I have no idea what present-day Borrovians think of " Wild Wales "—I fancy they concentrate rather on " L'Avengro " and " The Romany Rye ". I doubt if any of them know much about the Principality, and I fancy they would be a good deal at sea with Borrow's whimsical way of dealing with its literature and traditions, and in his haphazard encounters with its peasants and vagabonds. In short I am inclined to think they would miss the point right through. They allude to it in print, I am sure, much more often than they read it. "Take it as read", in fact! Long ago I used to think it a delightful book, but then I knew almost every path the author trod, so far as his rather vague topography and disconcerting nomenclature permitted, and such associations are irresistible on the printed page, above all when life is young and the world is fresh. I am not quite so sure about it now. Some one wrote the other day that Borrovians were born, not made. We will leave it at that.

Instead of law in the office of the gentleman whom he describes with his accustomed hyperbole as not merely the prince of solicitors in Norwich but in all England, he learnt Welsh from his master's Welsh groom! An astonishing freak on the part of a raw youth in East Anglia. Endowed with the gift of tongues and an abnormal memory, and with no taste whatever for law, young Borrow retained the services after stable hours of this humble domestic. The vernacular speech was not enough for him. He procured Welsh books, whence or where, with his limited opportunities, I cannot imagine, and seems to have either read, or read about, all the leading Welsh poets in the original and got a slight smattering of Welsh history to round them off, probably from "Powell" and "Humphry Lloyd" or the "Brut". In the meantime he had never even seen Wales, till he turned up at Llangollen as an elderly man during the Crimean War, accompanied by the accommodating widow he had married and her grown-up daughter. The first-named lady receives a most resounding eulogy for her domestic and other qualities, all calculated to make him comfortable at his home in Norfolk, where, I think, he was rather a thorn in the flesh to some of his neighbours. Assuredly no country squire or parson after reading "Wild Wales" would yearn for him as a parishioner.

His ladies, it may be remembered, after enjoying an apparently fine August at Llangollen and thence following their lord, though by no means always as fellow-wayfarers, to Bangor and Snowdon, abandoned the quest like practical, comfort-loving East Anglians, as one seems to picture them. The chills of approaching autumn and possibly a satiety of the inscrutable Welsh bards by the hearth at night, determined them for home, and away they went. While with a conscience thus free of reproach and a renewal perhaps of his old gipsying, wayfaring emotions, Borrow stumps on through Central and South Wales with his boisterous, prize-fighting manner tempered by poetry and sentiment, till the late November gloom drove him home.

Perhaps he had been just previously renewing the studies of his youth, though he doesn't hint at it. Anyway his memory was prodigious. At almost every bardic haunt, mediæval or modern, he can lift up his voice and chant some improvised translation from the works of the poet, though by the same token he has overlooked the love-lorn adorer of Myfanwy and the even better known eulogist of the banquets of Valle Crucis.

His were the days when tourists hired guides to go a couple of miles from their door. Even Borrow who, despite his fairly advanced years, was a wonderful walker and in youth had faced the wilds of Spain, very often took one along. His " John Jones ", retained all the time he was at Llangollen, stands out among these quaint and humble companions of his rambles—not for any intrinsic humours or merits of his own, but as the medium with whom his employer carries on his original conversations, real or imaginary. No doubt John Jones was staggered, as was every Welsh peasant who encountered Borrow from Flint to Pembroke and from Anglesea to Chepstow. None of them had ever seen such an Englishman. A gentleman, too, speaking Welsh and such Welsh it must have sounded to them, my goodness! Capping their simple legends with more awesome ones and telling them all sorts of old yarns about their own country. There was no precedent for such a weird wight! Where did he come from? Could he possibly be an Englishman? Surely a South-Walian! said the Northerners, a people who, to their ears, spoke a strange jargon. Could he be a Northerner? said the others, mystified by his outlandish Welsh. A crowd in Cardiganshire actually stoned him as such. But he made them understand him somehow, or at least he says he did, though to speak intelligible Welsh, and to rustics too, from books alone is accounted one of the impossible achievements. Now and again a cottager slammed the door in his face, half angered and half terrified at the contrast between the speech and the appearance of the rather formidable, burly, pushing stranger.

" You could teach me a lot of Welsh, sir ", said one more friendly companion of a wayside hour. " So many of your words are beyond my poor comprehension." For Borrow had no objection to telling stories against himself, of which personage, however, he had a most excellent opinion. The Crimean War was raging and in its critical stage, but it didn't worry our traveller much. All concerned with the direction of affairs civil and military are dismissed as fools and asses, and when he reads in the newspaper at his wayside inn of a victory, he conceives it must be due to the French. For, typical Briton as he was, he could at times traduce his own countrymen with all the fervour of a modern pacifist! There is a strong flavour of Cobbett on his " rural rides " in Borrow's Welsh wanderings. His geese are all swans, his aversions are all devils, and his ingenuous denunciations and cock-sureness are sounded upon the same top note. He doesn't care tuppence about getting a place-name correctly, with all his Welsh purism, and thinks nothing of sticking down what it sounds like when shouted at him by an old woman in a high wind. The literary qualities of " Wild Wales " do not, I suppose, lend themselves to comparison with " L'Avengro " or " Romany Rye ", though its subject in one sense is infinitely more stirring. But there is a delightful open-air and " all-weathers " atmosphere about it—one of sun and moon, of light and cloud, of fresh morning and gathering dusk, of August harvest-time and drear November days—that always holds my fancy as the sturdy veteran stumps steadily through it all. His raciness and whimsicality do the rest. His tremendous inaccuracies matter nothing. He never even looks at a map, though the country ahead is a blank to him. But he gets hold of the nearest rustic to pilot him along to some distant goal that memories of his youthful studies with the Welsh groom at Norwich have inspired him to visit, and he plods steadily for it, loving East Anglians, as one seems to picture them. The chills of approaching autumn and possibly a satiety of the inscrutable Welsh bards by the hearth at night, determined them for home, and away they went. While with a conscience thus free of reproach and a renewal perhaps of his old gipsying, wayfaring emotions, Borrow stumps on through Central and South Wales with his boisterous, prize-fighting manner tempered by poetry and sentiment, till the late November gloom drove him home.

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Now the road branching off from the Dee valley, past Valle Crucis and the Eliseg pillar, which we have recently traversed, climbs the mountain range beyond into high, thinly peopled vales where the ancient tongue has an even tighter grip than along the Dee, and where no tourist is ever seen. It is a simple matter, too, from the pass overlooking this back-lying upland to climb Moel Gamelyn, of which anon. But no American, at any rate, should fail to descend the pass, the Bwlch Mawr, into the unvisited land behind it. For a couple of miles or so on, in the sequestered village of Bryn-Eglwys (the church on the hill) and all about it lie the lands of Yale—the estate, that is to say—for the old mediæval lordship of that name covered all this region. The Yale family owned it till the other day, and it was from one of them, who did so much towards founding the famous university in New England two hundred years ago, that it derived its name. He lies buried, not in the Yale chapel attached to this church of Bryn-Eglwys, but at Wrexham, ten miles away, under an inscribed monument on which his career is briefly and quaintly epitomized:

> "Born in America: in Europe bred.
> In Africa travelled and in India wed,
> Where long he lived and strived: at London dead."

Many Americans, I believe, do pay their respects to Elihu Yale's dust in the beautiful church at Wrexham. But I never heard of one coming up to Yale and Bryn-Eglwys, though about here myself a good deal in old days. The Yale chapel, where Elihu should by rights have been buried, like the rest of his family, forms the south transept of the little church of Bryn-Eglwys.

The name itself has some interest as being one of the very few territorial surnames surviving in Wales. Indeed I can only recall three or four more, outside English Pembrokeshire, at any period, though the border counties had many. In brief, there were no surnames, properly speaking, in Wales till the sixteenth century. Every one carried nine " aps " about with him officially, though informally was usually content to be known as the son of his father—Evan ap Hugh, for instance, hence Pugh—or by a nickname or " to-name ", as they have it in Scotland. This became intolerable. The Law Courts couldn't stand it. Henry VIII, it is said, wanted the Welsh squires to take the names of their places. It is a pity they didn't. Some, to be sure, would have paralysed the tongues of their Saxon friends in the later days of fusion, but most would have been sonorous and pleasing. Even then, however, the populace would have continued unlabelled! Unfortunately, gentle and simple adopted their own or their fathers' Christian names. Hence the dumbfoundering tautology of Welsh nomenclature. It results, however, in almost every one in the country, from the large landowner to the occupant of the humblest dwelling, having the name of his residence tacked on to his own when spoken of, which seems to give a touch of almost distinction to the obscurest " Jones " or " Williams " among them.

As a last word on Yale, I venture to think that should any alumnus of that famous university find his way up here some Sunday and take his seat in the Yale chapel of the old church of Bryn-Eglwys, among a few hill farmers and shepherds, and hear the old Church of England service read and sung through in the ancient Cymric tongue, he will feel that the cradle, or at least the god-parent, of his Alma Mater is a strange and primitive and romantic spot. If he does not feel a few thrills, he should do!

My serious walking days, alas! are over. There is no use in blinking the fact. But I can still, thank goodness, get up a mountain, or compass a reasonable distance on the flat. But Moel-y-Gamelyn, which signifies the " bare hilltop of the winding water "—in allusion, probably, to the great sweep of the Dee below—though a shapely and pointed heath-clad hill, just under 2000 feet, is easy enough of ascent from the Bwlch and many other directions. Its slightly lower, and near neighbour, Moel Morfydd, however, affords an even wider view. In truth, one need only get up to 1500 feet anywhere in North Wales, and for that matter anywhere in South Wales, to enjoy a dazzling prospect in a land at once so gridironed with mountain ranges and so radiantly luxuriant in foreground and valley. From the modest height of Morfydd (some 1700 feet), and given a reasonable atmospheric clarity, the Snowdon mountains, though forty miles away, display their every peak and ridge, firm, grey, and clear against the western sky. While just across the Dee, shimmering far below, the smoother Berwyns raise their humpy, heathery heights and roll them westward in long procession through the heart of North Wales, till they fade away into the sharp, pale outlines of the twin peaks of the Arans and the Cader group.

There too, marking the near presence of Bala Lake, shoots up Arenig-fawr, that bold, outstanding mountain peak which many an unsophisticated traveller believes to be Snowdon, while many an unenterprising dweller on the English border will live and die in that belief. Northward, we can look right over the high, bare uplands where we have just left Yale sheltering amid a scant oasis of woodland. Over beyond this again is the head of the Vale of Clwyd, the Garden of North Wales, though only to be defined from here by the mountain ranges which enclose it as it forges away due northward to the sea. But best of all, perhaps, is the enchanting vale at our feet, through which the Dee urges its wild streams in shining rapids and deep, rock-bound, shadowed pools.

> "Here the clean-watered Dee his woodland chimes
> Steers with sweet skill from rich Edeyrnion,
> Leaving on shaggy rock and mountain bending
> Shreds of faint echoes waked in his descending."

From here, and for a few miles upstream, we can freely trace the woody gorges of Glyndyfrdwy, through which the sacred river—for even the English poets from Spenser to Tennyson have recognized its divinity—comes thundering down from its gentler voyaging through the green vale of Edeyrnion. On this

VALLEY OF THE DEE, GLYNDYFRDWY

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lofty pedestal, a thousand or more feet above it, with no sound stirring about it but the tweet of the tit-lark or the plaint of a peewit, the hoarse voice of the river chafing amid the jagged rocks of Rhiwl is plainly audible. Eastward again—away over Llangollen, between the Eglwyseg Cliffs and the opposing Berwyn ridge and over the near peak of Dinas Brân—the low country of Shropshire glimmers away till on the remote horizon her famous heights, Caradoc and the Wrekin, the Breidden, the Long Mynd, and the Styper Stones, show faint and far their, to me, ever familiar forms.

Despite the weeks he tarried at Llangollen, Borrow does not seem to have climbed the Gamelyn heights, nor yet ranged the grassy sweeps which make easy travelling along the summits of the Eglwyseg Cliffs. Set him on a road or a path, however, and he will stump up hill and down dale for ever. Men of his generation over fifty, save for a few hardy old sportsmen, had frankly abandoned all claim to nimbleness, howsoever stout of leg. In his occasional mountain ventures Borrow describes as perilous and demanding the assistance of his guide, familiar little bits of descent that the average modern of fifty would almost skip down. Yet he had been an active and even daring man in his youth too! He was assuredly a strong one in advanced middle age. No drenching rains seem to have had the least effect on him. He had no digestion fads. On the contrary, he would drink a pint or more of ale with critical enjoyment at every stage, and sometimes between the stages, of his day's tramp, and on occasion a glass or two of brandy and water to top up with almost as a pious rite—and to be recorded as such. Times have changed indeed. Ex-distributor of Bibles, strong churchman and evangelical, there was no humbug about Borrow. I would give a kingdom to hear his shade hold forth on Prohibition!

At any rate, John Jones didn't conduct him along that beautiful riverside walk of a dozen miles, from Llangollen to Glyndyfrdwy and Corwen, the glorious trail of which we have just been overlooking, both from Barber's Hill and from the Gamelyn mountain-tops. Now two miles above Llangollen, the upper entry to its vale is so nearly closed by the lower steeps of two opposing heights that road and railway have, as it were, to cut their way out above the river, whose fretting waters form the only natural passage. On the southern side of this narrow gorge the little station of Berwyn, from its high-perched platform, affords one of the most charming " compositions " of valley scenery in all Wales.

But to our walk upstream. We must cross this gorge of the Dee from Berwyn station by a chain suspension footbridge, unless we have come up the north bank of the river from Llangollen—perhaps the best plan. For on the way are some falls and a salmon ladder. And when the river is high and the fish are running, it is good to watch the salmon and sea-trout following their primeval instincts and facing the leap. Along this north bank, too, runs a canal—not the turgid canal of convention, but with the appearance rather of a large mill-stream brimming with pellucid water. It comes out of the river just above, where in gentler mood the latter's streams are held up for the purpose by a low horseshoe dam. This altogether romantic waterway was engineered, long before the days of the railroad, to carry slates and other truck into England. How felicitously it carries travellers to Chirk and the Ceiriog valley to-day will appear later. A picturesque, half-timbered inn stands at the end of the swing bridge over the gorge. It has endearing memories for me, for in the days gone by I have often sat there awaiting my train back up the river in the dusk of an April evening, after a long day's fishing! Like George Borrow, quaffing " the ale of Llangollen " with my particular " John Jones ", his coracle, that has buffeted the waves of the Dee for many hours and many miles, set up against the porch.

Facing upstream on the north of the river and following the lane that accompanies it more or less all the way to Glyndyfrdwy, one soon passes the little parish church of Llantysilio. Save for its encircling yew trees and picturesque pose, commanding as it does the whole of the enchanting vale which bears its name, there is nothing much to say about it. Down below, with its parkland stretching to the Dee, is Llantysilio Hall. Neither of ancient build nor ancient fame, it is nevertheless a most inviting spot. That more than one Victorian celebrity was attracted to it as a residence is not surprising. On the opposite bank of the Dee, and upon a leafy ledge close beside it, is the home of the late Sir Theodore Martin, Queen Victoria's biographer, and his wife, formerly the celebrated Shakespearean actress, Helen Faucit, whom the hypercritical Macready throughout his memoirs holds always in such high esteem. Here begins that horseshoe loop of three or four miles with which the Dee breaks away from road and railway and follows its secluded and encircling course on which few pursue it. There are lanes that make such an enterprise simple enough and rich in their own reward. But on this revisitation I took the anglers' track by the river, so familiar to me on so many spring days of old. Now over stones and shingle, littered with the driftwood of winter floods, now by grassy trails winding amid the trunks of ash, oak, and sycamore groves. If the splendour of summer was upon the foliage, that of the river banks and the grassy floor of these tall groves had sobered down from the radiancy of spring, when the angler's eyes feast on the gay carpet of primroses and bluebells, of anemone, celandine, marigold, and what not before the buds above have burst sufficiently to break the sunshine. But only anglers have real intimacy with the inward beauties of a mountain stream or river, and to them, or such of them as are worthy to be considered, they are an open book. Others see them only in patches or from bridges for brief intervals. Poets celebrate, and artists sketch them—by samples. They don't live with them for hours and days, penetrating their green recesses. Nor is it theirs to stand in a hundred pools and shallows, searching the secrets of amber runs and silvery eddies in mid-stream, or of the darker depths that lave the feet of mossy crags or burrow under the bulging trunks of oak and willow, where the dipper and the sandpiper, those genii of the mountain stream, rear their young. And then, too, there is the ever-changing music of eddy and rapid, with its thousand melodies. There is none like it! But my reader, should he ever find himself pursuing these delectable ways with a walking-stick, will not follow the riverside trail nor assuredly wade the streams and probe their woodland secrets. For there are handy lanes here which sidle along the near slopes above, opening out anon into grassy ways, through brakes of gorse and bracken and silvery birches or hazel copses. There is no traffic to speak of, nor even any distant sound of it upon these sequestered ways. A cottage squats by the river bank, or a farmhouse, white-walled and flag-roofed, perches upon some woody brow, with the crags of a mountain spur rising high behind it. Green strips of meadow intervene betimes between these lower mountain slopes and the sheen of the river shyly glittering behind the grey columns of forest trees that have waxed tall and lusty in the deep soil of its high banks. There is no English here as in Llangollen, where as a second language it is in ready use. Still, a chance-met rustic in these lanes won't jump over the fence on catching sight of you, as he may still do in the back country of Carnarvon or Merioneth, lest he should be addressed to his infinite embarrassment in the Saxon tongue. But he will labour heavily and perfunctorily at it, should you invite conversation.

Had we come up the river by this track in April we should probably have met a coracle or two coming down-stream, and this is an object to be encountered, as seen here, on no other river in Britain. It would be a bit startling beyond a doubt at first sight to the stranger. For no craft like it plies upon any waters outside Wales, and even in Wales, on the Dee alone, does the coracle, the " Cwrwgle " , face rocks and rapids in the interests of trout-fishermen. On the Towy they are only used by the professional netters of salmon on the still tidal reaches below Carmarthen. The same applies to the Teify. I never saw one in practical use either on Severn, Wye, or Usk. But here on these seven miles of boisterous water, between Llansaintffraid village and the chain bridge at Berwyn above Llangollen, two or three of these primitive craft with their ingenious pilots have been in ply, when called for, ever since I can remember. I have had myself some lively times in them, some profitable ones, and one or two of dread memory.

A wickerwork, tarpaulin-covered, flat-bottomed tub with rounded corners, about five feet by three, and occupied by a couple of grown men sitting up high in it, and side by side, riding down a rock-tormented rapid, is a sight calculated to disconcert even the experienced waterman. Indeed, there have never been half a dozen men, at one time, on the river, who can manage a coracle and thus ride down its always difficult and sometimes perilous streams. The propelling instrument is a short, one-bladed paddle, worked by one hand with the top under the armpit, not as in a canoe, but on the principle of the figure of eight in the water. The fisherman sits beside his pilot on the cross plank, and of necessity at very close quarters, and his weapon is a light, short rod, with a cast of three flies and a rather short line. The coracle, though always moving down-stream, is skilfully thrust by the skipper to this side or to that of the river, wherever the best water or opportunities may offer. Any technical description of this curious sport would be quite out of place here. It will be enough that trouting from a coracle on these, the only waters where it is practised, is a thing altogether to itself. It is a fascinating and indeed thrilling business, different from any other sort of fly-fishing in the world. As there are only two or three coracles, save for an occasional private one, licensed on the river; and furthermore, as the trout only rise here in April and a little after, and lastly, as a coracle can't readily get down when the water is low and not safely when it is very high, the anglers who enjoy this exhilarating and unique sport in the course of the season may probably be counted on the fingers of two hands—so it can hardly be described as a popular pursuit! Moreover, many who are, or used to be, fond of fishing the Dee, rather dangerous as it is down here, in waders, won't face a coracle. Some are too fat to fit on to the seat. Some are too tall to feel comfortable with so little between them and the swift and vasty deep. Some cannot swim in their clothes, and have families they declare dependent on them. Others again are not quick-sighted or quick-handed enough to get their flies on and off the constantly shifting water, and never repeat the first experiment. While there are many, again, who frankly mistrust the look of the ship and the line of country they are expected to ride in it. In a clearing flood, just fit for the fly, there are really many exciting moments outside the fishing, and the skill of our Evan Evans or John Jones in circumventing the foam-covered rocks is a thing not only to be admired but to be thankful for.

The memory of my various pilots comes back gratefully to me through the years. The last voyage of all, however, many years ago now, and with the veteran Evan Evans, I shall never forget—not for any mishap of navigation, but for the terror of the elements. For it was here by Rhiwl rocks down on this now green and fern-clad slope, alive with the chirrup of wheatears, linnets and stonechats, that we were at last driven on shore by the hyperborean rigours of that March day. For the Dee, I should state, is an early river, and that much rarer thing, an east wind river. That is to say, the trout come into fair condition and begin to rise in late March, and practically cease surface feeding in early May. Furthermore, they rather like an east wind and have no objection even to an April snowstorm, if the March brown is up. But no fish will stand a north wind, and when on that dire occasion I met Evan with his coracle by the Llangollen train at Glyndyfrdwy, it had begun to snow heavily from the north, and, as I have said, March was not yet out. But as we were both of us stranded far from our respective domiciles at a wayside station, without escape for hours, we took our desperate decision and embarked for Llangollen. There is no turning back from this trip. You can't paddle up a rocky salmon river. Once started you must pursue it to the bitter end, here represented by the Berwyn railway station, on account of the coracle. The early morning, though very cold, had at least been fine, and we were not clad for blizzards. So we wrapped ourselves round with our morning newspapers—Evan with his Radical organ, " The Manchester Guardian ", I with my Conservative " Liverpool Post ", and buttoned our coats over our politics. I might make a feeble joke about the greater Protective qualities of mine, that being the policy then in the air ! It proved in truth a bitter and a dismal journey down the dark, seething waters amid the often half-blinding snowstorms. A few foolish trout actually fastened, but they felt like icicles in one's numbed hands in the unhooking. After some three hours, and at these very Rhiwl rocks as stated, we finally succumbed, wet and frozen. Such conditions in a tub five feet odd by three were no longer endurable. With the utmost reluctance, and against all precedent, Evan deposited his precious coracle in a thicket and we parted—he to his home at Llangollen, five miles down the river; I to my quarters, about the same distance up it. Poor old Evan broke his neck not long after this, falling off a crag into the river.

But, in the meantime, here is Glyndyfrdwy. The long spurs of the Gamelyn range have by this time subsided into rugged foot-hills, whose rocky crests rise picturesquely above the homesteads sprinkled here and there along this leafy riverside lane. The Berwyns, too, are again confronting us at close quarters across the river, and the village which bears the name of the great Glyndwr for the best of reasons straggles along their feet. A woody ravine, channelled by a tumbling stream, here cleaves the range, and a quarryman's path ascending it leads over the high grouse moors into the head of the parallel valley of the Ceiriog—a delightful walk. A bridge here spans the Dee, contracted for a moment into a deep, rock-bound channel. It is well to cross it and get out on to the Holyhead road for Corwen. For a mile or so up it, a lofty tumulus crowned with fir trees stands by the highway, with the river chafing far below at its farther base. The tumulus is prehistoric. But the fact that with all the windings and twistings of the Dee it commands a clear view of Dinas Brân shooting up its pointed crown six miles away as the crow flies, suggests its obvious use in the days of old as a signal station, since Dinas Brân commanded half Shropshire. Here at its foot at any rate was the residence of the great Owain Glyndwr, the lord of all this country, but destined to die a fugitive and homeless wanderer. He had another and more sumptuous seat over the Berwyns to the southward, but here at any rate stood the manor-house of his chief property, which stretched from Corwen to Llangollen. From the Commote of Glyndyfrdwy he took his name, Owain of Glyndyfrdwy (the Glen of the Dwfrdwy, otherwise the Dee). The traces of the foundations of the house were visible upon the turf within memory, but have now vanished. This conspicuous tumulus is known in the valley as Glyndwr's Mount. The tradition of him is in truth far stronger here than over the hills around his larger seat of Sycharth, so extolled by the bards of his day. Both this house and that, however, had the distinction of being burned by Henry V, when Prince of Wales, campaigning against Owain, who was claiming the same title. An old homestead beyond, named Pen-y-bont, is said to cover the site and contain some of the stone of Glyndwr's farm buildings. An adjoining field is still known as the " Field of Council ".

A fine old stone bridge of several arches crosses the Dee just beyond into the village of Llansaintffraid, now generally called Carrog, which straggles picturesquely along the crown of the river's high and leafy bank. It was a sweet place in harmony with its charming site when I used to frequent it, in various primitive quarters years ago, and harboured many quaint characters, including a venerable bard, who was the quaintest of them all. Some terrible red brick erections have now smirched it most deplorably; and red brick, for some inscrutable reason, refuses to mellow in North Wales. Here, too, survives a decrepit little fourteenth-century stone cottage known as Cachardy Owain, or " Owen's prison ". For it was within its narrow walls during those long years of war that he confined two or three of his most formidable enemies whom he had the good luck to capture early. Owen is the national hero of the average Welshman. As I have written his life, I shall not say too much about him in these pages, but that little I shall reserve till we get to his other place, where he would seem to have chiefly resided. But he is more of a personage in the memories of folks living here on the Dee, than he is beyond the Berwyns. For though this was his secondary residence, it was in the heart of his property and gave him his name. All the old men hereabouts who used to talk about Glyndwr when I first knew the country, are dead. They had some achievements of his to relate that were hardly scientific history. I would not swear there was not a veteran or two that did not claim to have known him personally!

We are now in the open and meadowy vale of Edeyrnion. Corwen is but two miles distant, and the Dee assumes a rather different character, which it maintains all the way up to Bala

Lake; sweeping in broad curves through a flat and verdant vale, now pressing to the foot of the Berwyns to receive some brawling brook from the high recesses of their wild glens, now curving away northward to the base of the less lofty but picturesque and broken hills that face them. Corwen is a typical North Welsh market town, grey and severe, with no æsthetic ambitions of any description. Nor have the needs of the visitor or tripper, as at Llangollen, set any mark upon it. What patches of red brick, always so dreadful against the grey stone of Wales, disturb the eye are purely native effort. It has a quite time-honoured hotel in its spacious market-place which is, of course, the "Owen Glyndwr". It flourished through the coaching period and had its windows regularly broken in sanguinary elections, when some outsider had the hardihood to oppose the stout-fisted combatants of the "Syr Watkin" nterest. But what were a few panes of glass in the election expenses of those halcyon days? There is also an interesting old church dedicated to St. Sulien. It bears on its north wall the imprint of Glyndwr's dagger, which a hardy legend maintains that he flung in a rage from the top of Pen-pigin—a throw of about three-quarters of a mile as the crow flies!

The little town is tucked right under the rather sharp northern ampart of the Berwyns, which, though giving a touch of the picturesque to its austerity, deprives it, as in the case of Llangollen, of its due share of sunlight. The grouse moors hang so close above it that on a shooting day a towering bird might easily drop dead in the High Street. Unpretentious as it looks on an off-day, it is a great gathering-place for both hill and valley men. At its cattle and sheep markets it is alive with ustic humanity all talking Welsh, mostly with animation. When the preachers muster here in force and hold a Calvinistic Methodist or Baptist festival, the hills and vales swarm into it again to hear sermons and to sing hymns. The Welsh Church, as every one knows, is now disestablished and deprived of its endowments. The process might be described as "expedient poliation."

It has at any rate made for peace, and the friends of the Church, mainly the Welsh laity, have had to put their hands deep into their pockets to refill, or in part refill, the aching void. For there is no doubt but that the bitterness will remain with this generation. The next will have forgotten it, which is just as well. We forget far worse things than that in this country, things which should be remembered, and in much less than a generation, and even taken credit for such signs of decadence. English Churchmen have been slow to assist. But then not five per cent know anything or care anything about the question. Indeed, till Rugby football emphasized a certain cleavage, the average Englishman hardly regarded Wales as a distinct country, but merely as a region with strange and marked characteristics like Cornwall or Yorkshire, and an incomprehensible patois for home use. Nor has he now the faintest notion of the Welsh national point of view. As a matter of fact it is by no means easy for him to get at it even if he were given to sympathetic analyses of his neighbours' temperaments, which he isn't a bit, as we all know. So the Welsh Church business, outside ardent Churchmen, did not interest Englishmen at all. Both the Tories who opposed and the Liberals, because they were largely Dissenters, who supported the measure, were equally ignorant of its merits, or its story, a fact sufficiently demonstrated by their constant allusions to the defunct Church of Ireland, with which that of Wales had no analogy whatever. The disendowed Welsh clergy have at least the satisfaction of knowing that their status has not been lowered by the change. Rightly or wrongly they held the belief very widely that a strong motive in the agitation for Disendowment was the jealousy of the Nonconformist ministers of the social status of the clergy, who, like themselves, usually sprang from the farming class, accompanied by the pious hope that an unendowed parson would henceforward have no longer an advantage over them in this particular. If they really cherished this belief, they must have been very simple and deficient in worldly knowledge, as no doubt many of them inevitably were and are.

Probably by grouping small parishes, as is being done even in some parts of England, and equalizing stipends, the Welsh clergy will be really better off than before. They will have the stimulus, too, of competition. Moreover, though Oxford and

Cambridge are only possible for a minority of candidates, they have a most liberal education with practically the same test at Lampeter. And Lampeter College, though a far cry from Llangollen, I take leave to note is a most charming place. Its quadrangles have acquired a touch of mellowness in the century and more of their existence. Its academic groves and lawns are all that such things should be. While the "noble river Teifi", as Giraldus justly calls it, on which it stands, is as clean and clear and brown as the Dee itself. It is in Cardiganshire, and no English tourist ever goes near it. But half the Welsh parsons come from Cardiganshire homes, so that, too, is as it should be.

CHAPTER IV

THE CEIRIOG VALLEY

MOST people staying in Llangollen pay a visit to Chirk: either to see the castle, or for the sake of the trip there and back by passenger boat, towed by a horse along the picturesque and shady canal already alluded to. For this, as I said before, is no ordinary waterway of the turgid, unlovely, barge-ridden kind, such as we are all familiar with, but a channel of clear mountain water, turf bordered and shaded by avenues. Moreover, it crosses the Dee valley by a long aqueduct, 120 feet high, and gives thereby a sense of adventure to the journey as well as an extremely fine view. It was not, however, to renew my acquaintance with this quite exhilarating experience in navigation that I sought out Chirk again, during the past summer, nor yet to inspect its famous castle, which also I had seen of old. But I had rather forgotten the Ceiriog valley, and it is regarded as one of the lesser gems of Wales. Moreover, it had recently been much in the world's eye: at any rate, in the eye of all Welshmen.

For the Corporation of Warrington, one of those dreary industrial towns that are fast disfiguring England, had cast an acquisitive eye on its limpid waters. In short, they were applying, or had applied, to Parliament for powers to submerge much of it in reservoirs. This ferocious scheme included the expulsion of a considerable number of the inhabitants, who, like most Welshmen, had an absurd sort of affection for their native valley, besides a rooted objection to being turned out of house and home and sent adrift on the world. Several farmhouses and cottages, one or two hamlets, and various places of worship were listed as on Warrington's black list. But it wasn't only the actual victims that objected to being sacrificed to the industrial Moloch, for the sentiment of all North Wales was aroused. Glyn Ceiriog is one of its beauty spots. It was also the birthplace of two of its most noted poets, as well as the scene of a famous victory in the Welsh struggle for independence.

Nor did it appear that this grimy abode of sixty thousand souls was at the moment in any want of water, but merely that it might be some day, when it had added another twenty or thirty thousand to its population and smirched another big patch of England's congested soil. This seemed adding insult to injury. It seemed preposterous, too, that the further crowding of this over-populated island should be thus complacently contemplated at the expense of the class who are the cream of its population, already a sadly disproportionate element. In short, that A1's should be displaced in favour of the propagation of C3's. The opposition in Wales was naturally vigorous, and was taking practical shape when Warrington, for the present at any rate, gave way. Liverpool and Birmingham may be quoted as having done the same thing that this Cheshire town was aiming at. But Lake Vyrnwy is in a remote spot, displaced comparatively few people as I can recall from personal experience, and is in itself a thing of beauty. Much the same may be said of the Lakes that now fill the equally secluded and sparsely occupied Elan Valley, and I can remember that, too, before the deluge. But if the memories of a great poet lie even there beneath the wave, Shelley was not a Welsh but an English bard, and they are in truth those of his disordered youth.

Chirk, which is just on the Welsh side of the border, used to be an old-fashioned, solid, rather consequential-looking village, as became a place which was under the eye not only of its own imposing castle, but also of Wynnstay, whose huge eighteenth-century mansion is perched high amid its expanding park lands. And yet more of it actually adjoins Brynkinalt, the ancient and present seat of the Trevors, whose monuments fill no little space in its old parish church. It has of recent years, however, reached out a long arm of villas, shops, and the like in the direction of the smoke-clouds away to the north, which hover over the coalfields of Ruabon and Acrefair, as if it were in some sort aspiring to a share in their prosperity while keeping clear of their dirt. No particular road traffic disturbed the ancient peace of Chirk when I was last in its streets. But now it is quite a different story. As the chief halting-place upon the Holyhead road since Shrewsbury, it goes without saying that the motorist was pretty much in evidence. Moreover, it was a perfect afternoon, and had actually not rained, I think, since the day before, when our little trio and the Ford car passed through it and thence dropped down into the Ceiriog valley just above where that enchanting stream dives under the high railroad viaduct to disappear into the woody mazes of the Brynkinalt parklands.

Before descending, we got some glimpses of Chirk Castle crowning its long green slopes. With its embattled gateway and flanking drum towers, it looks the very picture of a feudal fortress. It is, in fact, one of the many great border castles either built or perfected for fighting the Welsh before the final conquest, or for overawing them afterwards. Save that Roger Mortimer raised it, its successive owners through the Middle Ages are not greatly to the point here, as the list comprises most of those great baronial houses that owned castles, sometimes several of them, wherever fighting was to be done, besides very often others in Southern England. There they were comparatively secure and could furnish sumptuously from the spoils of France and other oversea countries, without any reasonable prospect of being burnt out. But Chirk Castle is right on Offa's Dyke, which runs through the park. It becomes interesting again in the Civil Wars. For in Elizabeth's time it had fallen to a Myddleton from the Vale of Clwyd, who was Lord Mayor of London and brother to that enterprising soul who founded the New River Company. For Myddleton's son and successor at Chirk became a noted Cromwellian General in all the Welsh and border operations, and it fell to him on one occasion to batter his own castle walls when in the hands of the Royalists. It only just escaped, however, worse treatment than the King's forces gave it. For Myddleton changed sides before the war ended and Cromwell, whose soldiers had occupied and greatly damaged it, came very near having it gutted like so many other castles. Charles I, too, had stopped here on his melancholy excursion into Wales in search of fresh support, and the room and bed he lay in are still shown.

It is a really noble pile of grey stone, massive, rectangular, and at each corner supported by Edwardian drum towers, all enclosing a courtyard of great extent, if memory serves me. I can also recall climbing up a stairway from the moat to the portal and passing through many stately chambers that had been little altered, I learned, since Myddleton's restoration. There were many fine paintings, too, of the family and other celebrities, including one or two of the Stuart kings and of Nell Gwynn. But the gem of the collection was an inlaid cabinet, said to have cost £10,000, given to the Civil War Myddleton by Charles II in token of his belated loyalty. One may wonder how many persons who had been loyal throughout got that much recognition out of the absent-minded egotist. The younger brother, for example, had been loyal all through the war. He had bought property in Carmarthenshire which still bears his name. The " New River " Myddleton, uncle to this pair, lost all his fortune in that enterprise, the shares of which, as we all know, became subsequently worth fabulous sums. The Castle is still in the hands of their descendants, now Myddleton-Biddulphs, and is, I believe, open to visitors at stated times.

The moment one enters the deep and narrow vale of the Ceiriog, it justifies its reputation and maintains it for ten or twelve miles, after which the road wanders up and out among the wild hills of the Berwyn range. It was no sort of " adventure " this, and we went slowly and smoothly along the excellent road that followed the windings of the stream. For my companions, though both were of North Wales, had never been up here before. For a mile or two the beautiful south slope of the Castle park rises sharply from the road, rich in magnificent forest trees, their giant trunks buried deep in waves of sheeny bracken. The wayward little river prattled merrily along, with fine, full and amber-tinted streams, through groves of alder and willow ; sometimes beside the road, at others curving away to encircle some small ribbon of meadow, at this time just ready for the scythe. We passed some trout-hatching ponds, and the site of the old Castle mill. At the Park end, where Offa's

Dyke crosses the glen, the folds of the enclosing hills fall back a little, till after some four miles they leave space enough for the village of Llansaintffraid-Glyn-Ceiriog to get irregular foothold on their lower slopes. We were here only three miles from Llangollen by the prodigiously steep mountain road that clambers up the Cefn-Ucha, the single Berwyn ridge that divides the two villages and the parallel valleys of the Dee and Ceiriog. John Jones brought Borrow over it, and here is the inn in the village street where he quenched his well-earned thirst. I remember crossing over it on a warm summer day, and the doing as full justice to the " ale of Llangollen " as Borrow did. The said hostelry seems to have developed vastly, however, since then, like most of the Welsh country inns on motoring roads. I had no thirst to quench this time—a great drawback to motoring—and no excuse for re-visiting the bar-parlour where I remember drenching rain caught me unawares and imprisoned me long enough to more than wear out the Borrovian musings the spot then aroused.

A little steam tram has run up from Chirk to Glyn, as this village with its long official name is colloquially called, these many years. The rails of apparently a two-foot gauge by the side of the road was the only sign we saw of its activity. A big quarry, just beyond Glyn, destroys for a moment the Arcadian charms of the Ceiriog. Probably one or two others, out of sight in the hills, help to account for the size of the village, and add their quota of cottages to the otherwise purely pastoral life of the valley.

Here at Glyn, highway and stream bend sharply to the south-west. Indeed the former suggests for the moment that it has shaken off all responsibilities beyond those assumed by what the maps mark as a second- or third-class road. Anyway it narrows considerably, and begins to rise up and down the obstructing toes of the overhanging heights. We now looked down for the most part into the valley from high above it, and away into the wild, bare hills that piled themselves up to the southward and at intervals opened out their lateral glens—in this full season spouting with white threads of water all hurrying down to the Ceiriog. We were by now into the country upon whose abounding waters Warrington had, and no doubt still has, its envious civic eyes. The little farmhouses with their tracery of lush hedgerows climbing the nearer slopes above them, or dipping to the stream beneath, seemed to me to be making eloquent protest against their threatened doom.

We pass the pretty hamlet of Trecheiriog with its well-kept little church by the wayside, at which point a road turns off southward to find its way apparently over a sea of wildish hills to Oswestry. Four miles up, our journey came to an end. To be sure the village of Llanarmon is not actually the end of the road, but this now divides into unfrequented and unreliable byways, while the Ceiriog bends sharply away towards the high grouse moors above Corwen, where it finds its source. Besides a church Llanarmon has two small inns, old-fashioned and seductive in appearance and facing one another across an open space around which the little village groups itself picturesquely, while the stream prattles cheerily through it into a shady grove—altogether a quite happy termination to this beautiful glen of the Ceiriog.

And here in a meadow by the side of the stream we boiled our kettle and took our ease and our tea. We had come about thirty miles from home, and that, too, by the shortest possible driving road, with no option but to return by the same. Yet across the high moors from which the dwindling Ceiriog was now rippling towards us from its infant source under Moel-Fernau, as we sat on its banks the mileage as the crow flies was scarcely a fourth of the above-named distance. In truth the barrier these Berwyn hills build up throughout their course across Wales between villages, parishes, and communities, is complete. The effect of this one upon the life of the country must always have been incalculable in its cleavages. It is wonderful still how little the people on either side know of each other. Indeed my guardian angels themselves, though tolerable travellers in many lands, had never before got round from their side of the Berwyn into the Ceiriog valley, and were kind enough to commend me for having introduced them to it.

If a valley hitherto unexplored is worth seeing, one should not go out at its head and worry about another route back.

For its beauty can never be fully appreciated till one has been both up and down it. Upon this all were agreed, as we descended this particular and delectable vale and found fresh charms and fresh outlooks in the descent. Moreover, while doing so it gives me an opportunity to allude to that most popular of Welsh nineteenth-century poets, " Ceiriog Hughes ". For he was a native of the valley and his shade, through the medium of his thousands of admirers, took a hand in the great protest against its submersion. Though he was inspired, no doubt, by these romantic scenes in which he was cradled, his dust lies far away in the churchyard of Llanwnog in Montgomeryshire, near the Upper Severn. I happened to be there the year before the War, and, though the bard had been years dead, I noticed his grave had been recently covered with a number of floral tributes. John Hughes, commonly known by his bardic name of " Ceiriog ", was born here, a farmer's son, in 1832. After spending the earlier part of his life as a clerk in a railroad office in Manchester, he was for the latter and greater part of it stationmaster at various country places in North Wales. He was a man of pure mind, wide sympathies, and noble aspirations. His verse had, and still has, a wonderful vogue amongst the Welsh people. No other singer in the Welsh tongue of modern times has approached him in popularity. His lyrics were eagerly seized on by musicians like Brinley Richards, fifty of whose " Songs of Wales " were written by " Ceiriog ", who seems to have had a gift like Tom Moore of suiting words to old airs. He is often called the " Burns of Wales ". For English readers it may be worth noting that he is the author of that stirring song " The March of the Men of Harlech ". But I fancy a Welshman would smile at Ceiriog's reputation being associated with it. It would be much as if James Thomson, the author of " The Seasons ", had been alluded to by his contemporaries as the author of " Rule Britannia ". The other bard bred in the vale was of much earlier date, that, namely, of the Civil Wars, and quite a different sort of person, to wit Huw Morris, of whom a word perhaps later.

For I have said nothing yet of the memorable battle—or rather series of battles—fought between the Welsh and English from Chirk upwards, all the way to Corwen along this high Berwyn ridge that divides the Ceiriog from the Dee. That able man and doughty soldier, Henry II, had here the surprise of his life. An old castle named Crogen formerly stood on the site where Roger Mortimer erected the present one of Chirk, and it seems to have been the pivot around which this conflict raged. At any rate it gave its name to the battle. Henry was making one of those periodical efforts of the mediæval kings to settle the Welsh question once and for all. His intentions were ferocious, though victory might have modified them. But he had no experience of Welsh campaigning, though he had a power of troops with him, English, Normans, Gascons, Flemings, and other foreigners—in fact a motley host. He had also two or three thousand woodcutters to fell the forests which in those days covered a great part of the Welsh mountains. It was unlucky for the King that he had to reckon with Owen Gwynnedd, the then reigning prince of North Wales, but by his personality the virtual controller of South Wales and also Powis, and one of the ablest men and soldiers mediæval Wales produced. "There came with Owen," says the old chronicle, "his brother Cadwallader and all the strength of North Wales, Prince Rhys with that of South Wales, Owen Cyfeiliog and Madoc ap Griffith with all the power of Powis." The King had come up by Oswestry, and the two armies joined issue just here, probably on the plateau and slopes around the castle. After a long and fierce combat, in which the King's life was saved at the sacrifice of his own by Hubert de Clare, the Welsh retreated over the moors towards Corwen. It was when the King's army followed them that the trouble as usual on these occasions began. For the rain descended in torrents and the winds blew with hurricane force. Only the long, high summit of this moorland ridge was then free of timber, and timber meant perpetual ambushes. Tents were blown to shivers, supplies were soaked and ruined. When the army reached the heights above Corwen, shivering, starving, and disheartened, to see the Welsh drawn up on the farther bank of the Dee, the campaign was over. There was nothing for it but to get out of this infernal country as quickly and as best they could, harassed all the way by their nimble-footed foes. Henry consoled himself by mutilating and blinding some noble Welsh youths, his hostages, including two sons of Owen Gwynedd.

But Crogen has gentler memories than old tales of war, cruelty, and tempest, for there is a Welsh ballad relating to this old castle set to a pleasing air and sung a good deal in Wales, known as " Maentra Gwen " (Venture Gwen). It is of the " Lord of Burleigh " type, in which the Lord of Crogen, disguised as a peasant, woos and weds a girl of lowly estate, and then brings her as his astonished and dumbfounded bride to the Castle and all the honours of his rank and station.

CHAPTER V

OWEN GLYNDWR

WE have already made allusion to the mound by the Holyhead road near Carrog overlooking a salmon pool on the Dee, on which Glyndwr's smaller mansion stood. But I left it for a visit to Sycharth, the more important of his two places, to say something of the hero himself and his deeds. We had intended when up the Ceiriog to cut across there by dubious byways from Llanarmon, from which remote village it is only three or four miles distant. But either the account we got of the road was intimidating, or as there were no particular allurements along it, the historical sense of my companions was not strong enough for the further effort! Or maybe the immediate attractions of our little tea-party on the banks of the Ceiriog were overmastering. Anyway we failed to get there—which is immaterial, as I revisited it a little later from the other and Montgomeryshire side while staying on the Tanat, a very simple matter. Indeed it was from that side I had first approached Sycharth when writing Owen's life long ago.

Llansilin, the hamlet in whose ancient church the hero presumably attended Mass, and where two centuries later the Cavalier bard, Huw Morris, cut a very prominent and protestant figure, stands upon the Cynllaeth brook. Downstream from the village to the Tanat, in a meadow by the roadside, the large flat-topped mound on which Sycharth stood, till it was burned by Prince Henry himself, rises conspicuous. The marks of moat and mounds lie all around, though no trace of masonry now remains. The hyperbole with which Owen's faithful old bard, Iolo Goch, "The Red Iolo", describes the glories of Sycharth is familiar enough to those who know anything about Glyndwr. And this with the Saxon is generally confined to Shakespeare's picture of him, which I think would have surprised both the hero and his friends. But, on the other hand, if he were not the wild Welsh chieftain depicted by the immortal bard, Iolo's description of his Sycharth establishment stretches the poetic licence a great deal farther in the opposite direction, as, for example, when he likens it to Cheapside and Westminster Abbey! When the bard, however, descends to ordinary prose, we may frankly accept his account of things. For Owen actually was, as his rent-rolls show, one of the wealthiest Welshmen of his day.

There was a gate-house, says Iolo, a strong tower and a moat. The house contained nine halls, each furnished with a wardrobe filled with the raiment of Glyndwr's retainers. Near by was a wooden building on posts and roofed with tiles, in which were eight rooms reserved for guests. There was a church, too, in the form of a cross (though this probably referred to Llansilin). Around was every convenience for maintaining a profuse hospitality: park, warren, pigeon-house, mill, orchards, and even a vineyard. Well-stocked fish-ponds, too, a heronry and game of all sorts. His wife was the "best of wives" and of a knightly family, a Hanmer of Hanmer in fact. He kept, too, the best of cooks, and his hospitality was so great that the gate-porter's office was a sinecure.

Owen was a little over forty when the troubles began in 1400. He had inherited his large estates direct from his forebears who had, before the Edwardian conquest, been Princes of Powys Fadog. His mother was the daughter of a Pembrokeshire gentleman of the Royal line of South Wales, and Owen was actually born in his maternal grandfather's house of Trefgarn, near Haverfordwest, and inherited property there, also, from his mother. His paternal grandmother was a l'Estrange of Knockin in Shropshire, granddaughter of the Baron l'Estrange whose troops killed the last Llewelyn at Builth. A strange irony of fate that Owen's great-grandsire should have slain the last Prince of Wales. Glyndwr was, in truth, no hill-chieftain, but a well-educated man of the world. He had been at Oxford, studied law at the Inns of Court, and served as Esquire first to Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, then in possession of the large territory attached to Dinas Brân, and afterwards to Henry of Lancaster himself, having in the meantime served a campaign in Scotland. He was thus by training an adherent of the House of Lancaster, and most assuredly would not have roused Wales against Henry in favour of the deposed Richard, if he had not been wantonly outraged in his own person and estate.

The cause of the whole trouble was Reginald, Lord Grey of Ruthin, an hereditary Lord Marcher and owner of a big portion of the Vale of Clwyd. His property adjoined Owen's in the hill-country north of Corwen, and to a slice of this he suddenly helped himself, apparently without rhyme or reason, driving Owen's tenants off their lands. The dispute was bitter and prolonged. Owen, like a law-abiding man, referred the question to the London Courts, which pronounced in his favour. But this did not stop Grey's encroachments, and Owen took the case again up to London. Unfortunately at the moment Grey's friends had the ear of the authorities, and the Welshman was refused a hearing in insulting fashion. Bishop Trevor of St. Asaph, Owen's territorial neighbour down the Dee, was in town at the time and urgently warned the Court against treating so influential a Welshman as Glyndwr in such cavalier fashion. Those foolish people, however, only jeered. But their jeers cost Wales and a great deal more than Wales a dozen years of desolating wars and an incalculable amount of blood and treasure and irreplaceable monuments.

For the country was in an uneasy condition at the moment. Its particular favourite, Richard II, had been deposed and done to death by the usurper Bolingbroke : Cheshire, too, Richard's own palatinate with its dependency of Flint, an unruly, warlike country, felt as Wales did. There were also in Wales many rankling grievances and causes of unrest irrelevant here. But there is not the slightest reason to suppose that Owen shared in such discontent, and certainly none that he would have risked his all to depose his old master from the throne in favour of Richard's heirs. But his treatment by the Crown officials, and by Grey, who had combined certain underhand acts of meanness with his violence, transformed his whole outlook.

As a man of Royal lineage and large estates, though titularly but a private gentleman, his pride revolted and his choler rose at being flouted by a Lord Marcher Baron, in effect an alien, imposed upon the country. So the war really began with a private feud between these two powerful neighbours. Sycharth or Glyndfrdwy—it doesn't appear which—was raided first by Grey or his friends. Owen and his in turn raided Ruthin. They didn't catch its lord that time, but on a later occasion Owen got him and shut him up tight in Dolbadarn Castle on the Llanberris lakes, where he lay for a year, till a ransom was paid which utterly ruined him for life.

How Owen's injuries and Owen's reprisals grew ultimately into a national revolt with himself at the head of it, is too long and intricate a story for these few pages. But it is quite certain that the peace of Wales would not have been seriously broken had there been no Glyndwr at the moment to organize and lead the movement. At first it was nominally for the deposed House of York, many even believing Richard himself to be still alive, but it soon resolved itself into a national struggle for that independence which in the last hundred years had become but a fading memory. But Owen was precisely the man to stir the imagination of his countrymen up to this pitch. All the old prophecies were raked up and repeated from lip to lip. Signs and portents, a comet with a fiery tail among them, appeared both in the heavens and on the earth. The bards came out in strength upon the warpath. They had been singing about ladies and nightingales and sylvan groves and banquets for three generations, but now they began to tune their harps to more heroic strains:

> "Cambria's princely eagle, hail!
> Of Gryffydd Vychans noble blood,
> Thy high renown shall never fail.
> Owain Glyndwr, the great and good,
> Lord of Dwrdwy's fertile vale,
> Warlike, highborn Owen, hail!"

The three old kingdoms of Wales, Gwynnedd, Powys, and Deheubath, had lost significance at the Edwardian conquest, and indeed before it. The country was now in two sharp divisions. The five counties of Anglesey, Carnarvon, Merioneth, Cardigan, and Carmarthen, which Edward I had formed and put under direct Crown government as in England, constituted the "Principality of Wales." The King's eldest son was then regarded as its Prince in fact, as well as in name, but only of so much of Wales. The rest of the country was a mosaic of Marcher-Lordships, governed by the Anglo-Norman baronial families that had won them at the point of the sword in earlier times, or been granted them for military service. Sometimes the old Welsh chieftains held them, like the others, direct of the King, and like them as almost independent sovereigns. Wales, thus swarming with warlike barons and full of men of both races inured to war, was a far more important part of Great Britain than it became in later days. The fate of the kingdom often turned on the Barons of the Welsh Marches: the Mortimers, the Clares, the Lacys, the Greys. All these small palatinates, with their capricious castle rule, were swept away by Henry VIII, and the present counties of Denbigh, Brecon, Radnor, Monmouth, and Glamorgan were created. Pembroke was rather a land unto itself, being half-English in blood, and had been always under the King's officials.

Such, in broad terms, was the Wales of Glyndwr's day: full of great castles, some held by the King's Constables, more by the Lord Marchers or their deputies, which he set out to recapture. It had travelled far from the more or less unity and nationalism of the old Llewelyn days. Welshmen had by now fought everywhere under the English flag, and the very garrisons of the numerous castles, originally English, were now largely Welsh. There could have been no certain reckoning on the sympathy of this or that community, whether for the rebellion with its risks, or for the *status quo*, which was fuller perhaps of irritants than discomforts or actual hardships. In truth, it must have been all uncertainty, when Glyndwr started out, proclaiming himself at once as Prince of Wales, and raising his dragon standard by the Dee. It was probably Richard's more than Owen's name, with the hope of support in England, that gave the latter such a good start, for race hatred had been fast dying out, certainly with men of Owen's rank. However that may be, his own magnetism, as a Welsh patriot, soon proved itself, and in course of time, to his infinite advantage, his enemies firmly believed him to be a magician. This, of course, came later, but he had success from the first in gathering forces to his standard in North Wales, through which he raided freely in the summer of 1400.

Henry himself came after Owen that autumn with a well-equipped army and remained a month, "seeking eagerly for some one to slay, but finding none". For Glyndwr, well knowing his raw levies were not yet capable of facing an English army, wisely dispersed them. The King in the meantime confiscated Owen's property and gave it to his own half-brother, the Earl of Somerset. He little thought how many years would pass away before rents could be collected in Sycharth or Glyndyfrdwy. But to almost every one else Henry offered a general pardon, for he had trouble just then with the Scots and had no mind to be worried with Wales. Carnarvon and Merioneth accepted and humbly tendered their thanks to the King, and all seemed well. The calm, however, was delusive, partly owing to the Parliament which met in the winter and passed a number of severe and galling ordinances against Welshmen. But they were worse than useless, for in the spring Owen and his friends, many of whom became noted partisan leaders, were in arms again and North Wales once more in tumult. Welshmen, from all over England, even students from Oxford and Cambridge, hurried home to take a hand in what was now beginning to be recognized as a national struggle, and destined to last for some ten years more.

Owen proved a born leader of guerilla warfare, for this is what the struggle inevitably resolved itself into on the side of the Welsh. On that of the English were constant invasions in force, always unsuccessful in bringing their enemies to a pitched battle, but always themselves discomfited by the country, the weather, and lack of supplies, and generally harassed in retreat by ambushes and rear-guard actions. There were constant sieges of castles, too, nearly all of which, after three or four years of such work, Owen had in his hands. In 1402 the tidings came to Henry of the battle of Pilleth Hill, near Knighton, in Radnorshire, that "post from Wales laden with heavy news", alluded to by Shakespeare. It was notable for the slaughter made of Edmund Mortimer's Radnor and Herefordshire tenantry, who had attacked a wing of Owen's forces, leaving 1100 dead upon the field, and Mortimer himself a prisoner in Glyndwr's hands. Now, Mortimer was uncle to the boy Earl of March, Yorkist heir to the throne and virtually head of that powerful family. He now ratted as the King refused to ransom him, married Owen's daughter, and became his man. This gave a rather different aspect to the war, particularly when coupled with the suspicious attitude of the Percys, who, it will be remembered, had played such a part in helping Henry to the throne.

Hotspur all this time had been the Governor of North Wales—a rather lukewarm one to be sure for so fiery a warrior. He is more than suspected of having arranged a secret interview with Owen, which becomes significant in the light of future events. But Hotspur now went off to his father in the north, taking a lot of trained Welsh and Cheshire archers with him, to fight the Scots for the King and incidentally, owing to the wonderful shooting of the Welshmen, winning the dramatic victory of Homildon Hill, in Northumberland. The well-known quarrel with the King over the ransom of the valuable prisoners from this stricken field set the seal on the Percys' defection. They were henceforward allies of Glyndwr, not very helpful ones, as the battle of Shrewsbury knocked them out. But with the interests of the House of York and of the Percys thus fortuitously linked with his own ambitions, the independence of Wales with Owen as its Prince became once more associated with the dynastic interests of Richard's heirs. Out of this grew later the mysterious Tripartite Alliance, which Shakespeare has represented in a famous scene, ante-dating it for dramatic purposes to the battle of Shrewsbury. But it was long after this that Owen, Edmund Mortimer, and the dead Hotspur's father, the old Earl, met at Aberdaron, on the remotest shores of the Lleyn peninsula, and signed an Indenture, giving Owen Wales and a little more, and dividing England between the other two aspirants.

Henry's reply to the disaster at Pilleth was three large armies dispatched into Wales. But all three came out again as many weeks, having accomplished nothing, though battered and bruised by the tempestuous weather, every one convinced that Owen was a magician and controlled the elements. In 1403 Prince Henry took command in Wales, and learned those early lessons in war which stood him in such good stead later on the fields of France. He raided up the Dee valley and burned both Sycharth and Glyndyfrdwy. Letters from the Prince himself describing these achievements are preserved. Owen was then in South Wales, most of which he had reduced. Panic-stricken letters from officials in Herefordshire and Salop bear witness to the scare he had created. The battle of Shrewsbury, however, was his great opportunity, as his own forces added to those of the Percys would undoubtedly have brought about the defeat of the King's army. But communications from the north went astray, and Owen knew nothing about what obviously had been Hotspur's intentions.

The defeat of the Percys did a little, but not much, to loosen the grip that Owen had now got on Wales. All save a few castles and Pembrokeshire were in his hands, but his methods of strife were ruthless. He laid low and burnt the property of all who would not join him and destroyed so many abbeys and monasteries, having a special grudge against the Church as an outpost of English rule, that the effect of his iconoclasm is plain to this very day. In 1404 his power was at its zenith, and from this time it began, though very gradually, to crumble. Pardons to all but the leaders were to be had at almost any time, and the waste and stress of war must have brought weariness to many patriotic souls. But Owen was not only a fighting man. He was both a diplomat and statesman. He sent envoys to the King of France, offering an alliance and promising to follow his lead in acknowledging the Avignon Pope. Charles accepted the overtures and contracted a formal alliance for the government of Wales. In a lengthy document, still extant, Owen explained his scheme. There was to be an Archbishop of St. Davids, the Welsh Church was to be purged of its Saxon elements and all Saxon influences, and furthermore there were to be two universities. He also wrote letters to Scottish and Irish chiefs, asking their help, which he did not get. He held parliaments, summoning thither representatives from all parts of Wales, at Dolgelly, Harlech, and Machynlleth. Though he had burnt the cathedrals of Bangor and St. Asaph, he appointed fresh bishops to those dioceses. In 1405 a large French fleet sailed for Milford Haven. Many of its ships were destroyed by the ever-watchful seamen of the Cinque Ports. But three or four thousand French soldiers landed and marched with Owen into England, getting as far as Woodbury Hill, near Worcester, whence the King drove them back in rather leisurely fashion to Wales.

From 1406 Owen's power began seriously to decline. Prince Henry and his forces stuck to the Border, and by making frequent attacks on the Welsh kept the feeling alive that a day of reckoning was at hand, and that it might be well to seize the offers of pardon so liberally made. For the country was in a deplorable state, and the English markets were of course closed. Henry had cleared away most of the troubles abroad and at home that had hampered the first half of his reign, and was better able to take Wales in hand. But Owen himself was at once indomitable and elusive. He had a marvellous faculty for disappearing when his enemies thought they had cornered him, and then turning up at the very moment when they least expected or wanted him. But his following grew by degress less and less, the castles were gradually recovered, and more districts, sick of war, were glad to make their peace. Welsh independence in the days when Might was Right the world over was a dream, in view of the limited dimensions of the smaller country and its geographical position as regards its great neighbour. Hitherto its mountain fastnesses had given a sort of rough security to certain portions of its people in time of war. But such primitive conditions would of a certainty lose their significance before the coming centuries. They could not last for ever.

The last military operation of note in Wales was the siege of Aberystwith Castle in 1407. Though Owen's cause was fast failing he still kept the Crown forces busy. From Aberystwith he controlled much of the western coast country, and its capture seemed to spell the end of his grip on habitable Wales. At any rate, it was made a great occasion for a display of force by the Prince. The King was to have been present in person, but had probably had enough of Wales and failed to turn up. A great siege train, however, was collected and laboriously hauled by oxen across England and Wales to the Cardiganshire coast. It seems to have been the first occasion on which cannons were used against a British fortress. The guns of that day were fired off about once an hour, were loaded with large stones, and sooner or later—generally sooner—burst, doing more execution among their friends than perhaps they had ever done all told among their foes.

At any rate, they effected nothing against the obstinate garrison of Aberystwith, though the thunder they made among the hills and mountains which surround that beautiful and then remote spot must have given the inhabitants of the neighbourhood the shock of their lives. But this siege seems to have been an altogether curious episode, and much more than a mere incident in a prolonged war. For some reason or other it became the fashion of the moment. All the English chivalry, that could manage it, seem to have resorted there. It was high summer too, and even Owen's magic would be put to it to bring down snow and hail upon them as he had done in spring and early autumn. Nor would there be any opposition now to a pleasant promenade through South Wales, and little risk of being annoyed on the way home. It would be frivolous, perhaps, to describe it as a gigantic summer picnic to which the King had issued special invitations. But it really seems to have been something approaching that. The distinguished company, however, appear to have enjoyed their outing, though they did not get the castle. Owen's lieutenant, Rhys ap Griffith, who defended it most stoutly, and had the honours of the carnival, had actually consented to give it up at a certain date, if not relieved. But at the critical moment Owen, as was his frequent habit, appeared himself with reinforcements, and in due course the besieging force, which had outstayed what may be called the "visitors," and were worried by raids from the Plynlimmon mountains, went home.

But I have only dwelt on this as a curious incident. There is nothing more to be said in detail about Glyndwr's resistance. The old hero hung out for several more years in the mountain fastnesses of North and Central Wales, with a band of faithful followers, still making raids from time to time on his enemies. Edmund Mortimer in the meantime had died some time before in Harlech Castle, of starvation, it was said, during a siege. Glyndwr's wife, " that best of wives ", was dead too. She and some of his family had been captured and taken up to London, though not to be in any way ill-treated. A brother and one of his sons had been killed in the war. When Prince Henry came to the throne, though Glyndwr had long ceased from troubling, he seems to have had a generous thought for the obstinate old hero who had incidentally taught him so much of war. For he sent Owen's surviving son to Wales with a full pardon for him. It appears, however, that either he could not find his father, or that he refused all overtures.

The rest is mystery, though a strong tradition has it that after wandering about in solitude for a time in various disguises, Owen found at last a refuge with one of his several well-married daughters, either the wife of Scudamore of Kentchurch Court on the Monnow, whose descendants, by the way, still own it, or with another who married a Monnington of Monnington on the Wye. The latter place is held as the more likely, and a rude slab in the churchyard is pointed out to the faithful few who ever find their way there as covering the dust of the man who vanished so strangely and mysteriously from the eyes of his friends and foes with the last echoes of the turmoil into which for so many years he had plunged his native country. It hardly needs saying that in the minds of many in that credulous age, he was not dead but sleeping. Like Arthur he had his cave, his Ogaf, where he and his men lay resting by their arms awaiting the summons to rise once more and strike another blow for the freedom of Wales. But the Tudors of Pen-mynydd, whose forebears went out with Glyndwr from the first and ultimately suffered death at the King's hands, may fairly be said to have changed the trance of this dread company of warriors into an eternal sleep. For they achieved, without cost to

Wales, something very much better and quite as honourable as the dreams of Glyndwr. Here is the impression given of Wales at this moment by the poet Churchyard, who was himself a Welsh borderer and lived in the next century:

> "While quarrels' rage did nourish ruinous rack,
> And Owen Glindore set bloodie broils abroach,
> Full many a town was spoiled and put to sack
> And clear consumed to countrie's foul reproach.
>
> Great castles razed, fair buildings burnt to dust,
> Such revel reigned that men did live by lust.
> But since they came and yielded unto law,
> Most meek as lambs within one yoke they draw."

CHAPTER VI

IN THE VALE OF EDEYRNION

THERE is a break in the northern wall of the Vale of Edeyrnion at Corwen, where the Alwen comes sparkling down its own fairly spacious vale to join the Dee, a mile or so above that sombre little town. Lifted well up on the lower slope of the Berwyn, the windows of Plâs-Coed looked down on the meeting of the two rivers, rushing into one another's arms in the green strath below, and in this wet summer with no slight commotion. It was a prospect to live with, though to me no strange one—a fine expanse of broken low-country, a vivid green just now of wood and meadow, opening out wide to the foot of encircling hills. The high, bald summit of Caerdrwyn, over against Corwen across the Dee, displays quite plainly even from here the encircling stone rampart of its British camp against the sky. The wooded park-lands of Rûg, once owned by the historic family of Salusbury, confront us and climb the lower slope of heights that culminate in wild moorland. Thence the eye is carried westward over hills through which the Alwen twists by woody glens from the sequestered hamlets of Bettws-Garmon and Llanfihangel to the long whale-back of Caer Dinmael and the high wastes of Cerrig-y-Druidion.

We can follow the Dee, too, here right beneath us, up its own valley, shimmering through its screens of foliage. A short mile away upon its banks, on the farther one beneath a wooded hill, is a rather imposing homestead, a farmhouse this long time, but obviously on a scale that no Welsh tenant-farmer in the days when it was built would have aspired to. This is Gwerclas, and the Hughes', who owned it, though long vanished from the land and forgotten, were potent squires here for generations. All that remains of them lies under the sod of the long, lowbodied, rude old church of Llangar, once the parish church of Cynwyd, and now this many a year desolate and abandoned. Up the river, yet another mile, we can plainly see the four grey arches of Cynwyd bridge, the fourth one of age and dignity since Llangollen to span the sacred stream.

Llangar church, in the midst of a widespready graveyard of rank, untended grass, crowded with cracked or time-worn tombs, many undecipherable, others proclaiming in Welsh the simple record of Cynwyd's dead, lies just above our bank of the Dee.

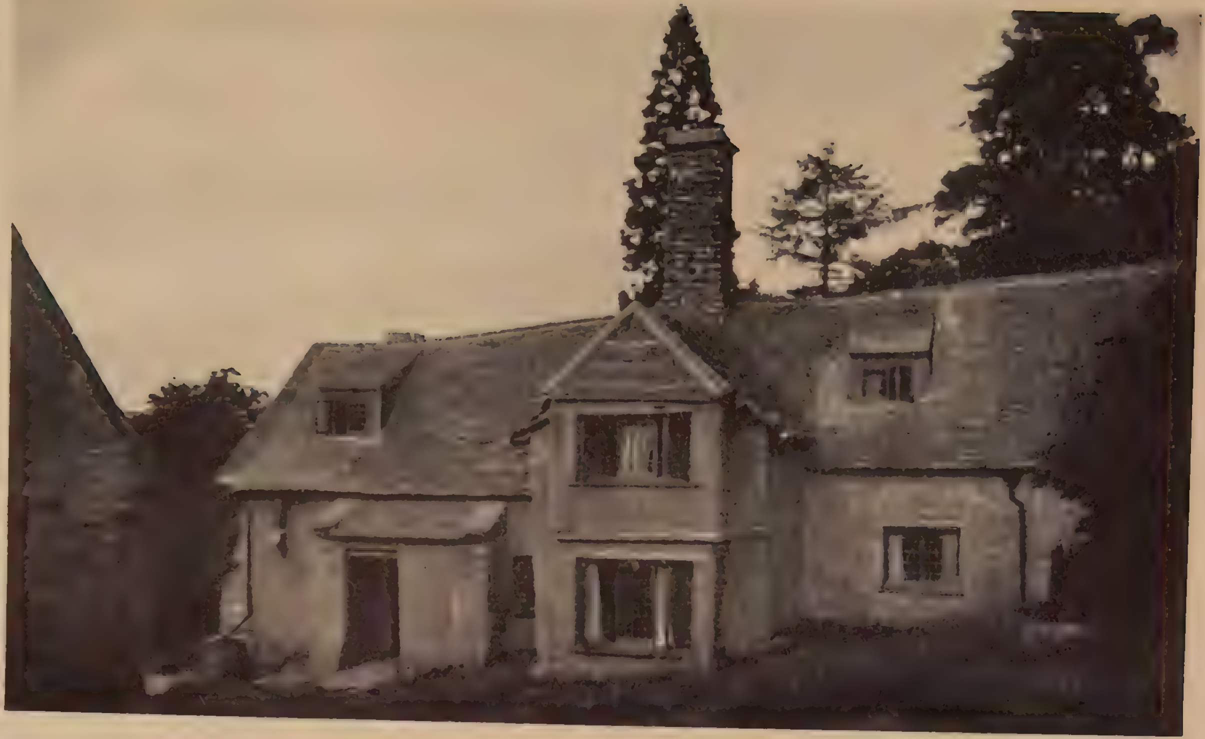
There is not even a path to it now from the distant high-road. There is no need for one. But it is almost worth while getting the key from the Vicarage, crossing a field, and having a look inside, for the very forlornness of the sight. In truth, one feels a bit nervous lest peradventure the roof should fall bodily on top of one, though for aught I know it may last a hundred years. All within is decay, and as there is a neat new church near the village and bridge, a mile away, there is really no reason why it should carry its weight of years and memories any longer. There is nothing mediæval or much ecclesiastical about the interior, though the fabric itself may be any age. The eighteenth century and all that implies, in rural Wales particularly, is written all over its dank decay. All is crumbling. The high-pitched pulpit, the rude pews, the equally rude seats of honour, those, no doubt, of Gwerclas, pressing up to the east end, both north and south of the altar, and on handshaking terms with the parson there officiating; the plain east window, outside which the grinning heads of impious urchins no doubt arranged themselves on intimate terms with the church's most mysterious rites. There is a west gallery, too, which I would not climb up into for worlds, that adds to the gloom of the ill-lit interior. Just imagine a gallery for the superfluous congregation of a rustic Welsh church nowadays! The average Sunday attendance at the quite handsome little church in the village is about fifteen!

I try to fancy the old Llangar church in the days, say, of George II—before Nonconformity got any headway in Wales. When the country was run by Tory squires, and the parish church was the last word as a rendezvous. When there was no education, but much gaiety, if not always of a decorous sort. When gentle and simple alike spoke the native tongue, and danced in barns on fête days, while the boys played ball in the churchyard as a kind of pious rite. An English lawyer in the year 1744, coming into a Welsh village on one of these festive occasions, describes the cheery throng of countryfolk, in their neat gala dresses, the women and girls in their pointed beaver hats and frilled white caps. Booths were set up, stocked with simple delicacies. Dancing in a barn near by, ten couples of well-dressed gentlefolk call forth our traveller's admiration for the "skill and agility" they display. In the churchyard itself, two or three sets of the peasantry were executing country dances to the music of fiddlers seated on the adjoining tombstones, while against the wall of the church, boys and young men were playing fives. In those old days, too, certain airs and ditties were associated with local notables and known as "bumpers": something in the nature of family or clan songs. I have seen the contemporary score of one of these, entitled "Bumper Squire Jones". One could well fancy Peacock in his delightful picture of the great Christmas gathering in the Snowdon mountains at Headlong Hall, had such in his mind. The scene may be remembered when the dance grew fast and furious in the small hours, and the old squire, accompanied by the whole tribe of relations and friends, roared in chorus the clan song of "Headlong ap Headlong". Peacock's wife, it may be recalled—the "Snowdonian antelope" as his friend Shelley called her—was of this country.

There were half-days of sunshine this summer, and half-days and whole nights of rain—others of gloom and hurtling clouds. But a wide outlook from one's windows over hills and mountains has compensations in wet weather, unprovided by tamer landscapes. To these last the sunshine is almost imperative. A wet day in Kent or Suffolk is merely a blank of soppy fields, dripping coverts, and muddy roads. There are no heights, no mysteries, no solitudes, nothing to harmonize with the mood of rolling clouds and wild skies, or take a part in the hurly-burly of the heavens. If one has to be held prisoner by the elements, it is something at least to watch them lashing the mountain-sides and filling the cataracts. But there are yet other consolations too. For when the storms pass away, the sun breaks out over scenes that in the fine summers, which we pray for and sometimes get, only give us of their best at the dawn and decline of day. It is when the tempests are only lying low that we get the great illuminations.

I was fortunately placed for getting the best out of all kinds. Immediately behind the house, a plantation of some sixty years' growth clothed the hillside—a small wood of but a few acres, to be sure, but a perfect storehouse of every forest tree, common or rare, that thrives in Wales. It had been originally rough mountain-side. Sharp bluffs of mossy or lichen-covered rock turned aside the many grassy footpaths laid out in tortuous fashion through its steep and shady depths. For these were all contrived in the leisurely days, and before the demands of war had laid low some of the most shapely trees and left in places, at any rate, the devastating trail of the timber contractor. For the litter and chaos, which is his usual legacy, is even worse than the loss of that he takes away. But it might have been far worse. It was lucky for this wood, and indeed for the woods of North Wales and the Border generally, where the oak above all trees has been ever the pride of the land, that its timber was at a discount when other growths—ash, pine, and larch—which could be more easily spared were falling wholesale.

At the foot of the wood just behind the Plâs is an ancient fifteenth-century house, an admirable and typical example of the abode of a Welsh squire when Henry of Richmond marched to Bosworth field, taking so many of them along with him. All kinds of things happen in the depths of this wood. Winged visitors are ever bursting through its thick roof, and even a stray grouse on shooting days may plump into the deep heather on its fringe, or a hawk catch a hunted song-bird at its last dash for safety and flutter down with its prey on to a bough. Scared cushats thunder out of its matted foliage. Crows fight brief battles within it that sound terrific but leave no casualties, or a hunted hare plunges panic-stricken from the mountain into its thick undergrowth before a poaching dog. The chatter of



FIFTEENTH-CENTURY HOUSE BEHIND PLÂS-COED

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jays the tap of a woodpecker, or the crow of a wandering cock pheasant occasionally startle its echoes. But worse sounds than these come out of the wood in the stillness of the night, so close is it to the windows of the house. Octavia in wakeful hours suffers agonies, she avers, when the death-cry of a rabbit or some lesser victim of the vermin that prowl in the dark hours rends the night and at the same time her hypersensitive heart-strings.

The mazy paths still wind themselves upwards between the stems, though smothered betimes by encroaching briars and bracken—there is no labour nowadays in North Wales for these sort of odd jobs. But the surprise and crown of all comes when daylight and the open are achieved at the summit of the wood, a five or ten minutes' climb. Then the full charm of the spot is disclosed. For one steps over the boundary fence right out on to the open heather, which fact alone might mean nothing. But this heather, which brushes the top of the wood, is the fringe of a grouse moor which stretches unbroken southward for miles and miles. With a step one passes from the sylvan peace of the deep wood, where the thrush and cushat builds, and all the hunted of the outer wild find refuge, to that of the everlasting hills, with their thick mantle of heather and bracken spreading away to their farthest and wildest bounds. The house is but a five minutes' stroll downhill. The highway up the Dee valley, with its hum and clatter of traffic, to Bala and the west coast watering-places, is but two bow-shots again below the house, so close at hand, though in but a thin stream, is the stir and racket of modern life. Yet up here and but half a mile beyond the wood, if you broke your leg you had perhaps better break your neck, the solitude is so undisturbed and so complete.

For the whole breadth of the Berwyn lies here before us to the far horizon, behind which the hills drop down into the head waters of the Ceiriog. A ten minutes' upward stroll, by crisp green sheep trails through the bracken and heather, and all North Wales is in sight if the visibility be normal. And in those many intervals one seized upon so eagerly last summer, it nearly always was so and something more. For the whole

Snowdon range, 40 miles away, the great monarch himself the centre of the group, was there nearly every time we sought it—Cynicht and Hebog, upon the one flank, the Glydyrs, Tryfan, Siabod, Llewelyn, and Dafydd upon the other, a noble array.

Immediately westward of our moor, the nearer Berwyns piled themselves up finely and the whole range rolled away to Bala Lake, and beyond it, where the two Arans took up the line with their sharp, aspiring summits. And behind the Arans, again, was the lion-like shape of Cader Idris, huge, misty, and dim against the sky. From here, too, one could track the Dee, by its intermittent gleam, for miles up the green and narrow Vale of Edeyrnion. More than once on a bright and hopeful morning, intent upon some distant height, I have been pulled up short, within sight of the edge of the wood by a vision of black clouds rising out of the distant sea and gradually wiping out Cader Idris, and next swallowing up the Arans in sombre shrouds. Disappointing at the moment though such signs and warnings may have been, there was a fascination in watching these dark masses hurtling towards us from the west, eating up the sunshine bit by bit, and quenching in their slow but steady march the light that lay with such fair promise on mountain, moor, and strath. More than once I lingered a bit too long and failed to reach the shelter of the wood before the storm smote our hill, and passing eastward to the Llangollen heights and the Gamelyn mountains, obscured the last lingering glories of the ruined day. At happier moments the little Trystion, rejoicing beneath us in its deep vale which skirts the moor and runs down at right angles to the Dee through the village of Cynwyd, made an enchanting foreground to the westward view. From a wild moorland stream, it drops just here beneath us for a brief span into the softer amenities of pastoral life, and half hidden by hedgerows, thicket, and copse, leaps down in rapids and sharp cascades towards the village bridge, and to its quieter passage thence into the neighbouring Dee. Its woody dingles, so far below us here, make an altogether felicitous foreground for the group of the nearer and loftiest of the Berwyn heights that rise behind and above it—Cader Fronwen, Cader Berwyn, and Moel Sych—the latter, under whose shadow we shall find ourselves on a later page, touching an altitude of 2800 feet.

One afternoon when the elements had apparently expended their daily rage by lunch-time, it so happened we were going over to Llandrillo, a trifle of 6 miles up the Dee valley by the Bala road. It transpired, however, that a wide circuit was first to be made in the interests of a goat which was due on a visit to a farm some miles away.

"You don't mind the goat coming with us, do you?" said Octavia.

"What, in the car?" said I, a trifle taken aback. "I suppose you will tie its legs." "Good gracious, no. She'll sit up as quiet on the seat as you and I. She loves motoring and has had several drives." Now I had noticed the goat once or twice when tethered near the stables, standing on its hindlegs and showing signs generally of suppressed activity, and in truth felt rather uneasy at the prospect of sitting beside it, and holding its hand, so to speak, for some miles over farm roads. "It will sit up between you and me nicely," said my hostess, "and you will hardly know she's there."

Now Octavia is one of those affectionate creatures who are on special and familiar terms of confidence and intimacy with certain animals, so I hoped for the best, and was not disappointed. I didn't see the goat step up into the car, but will readily take all that for granted. For when it came round to the front door, Nanny was there sure enough perched up on the seat as if she owned the whole outfit and was looking forward to a joy-ride. Dogs seated in motor-cars are natural and familiar objects of the highway. But here as we went at a leisurely pace along the Holyhead road up the Alwen valley, our goat behaved with as much dignity and preserved as imperturbable an expression as any canine mascot of a Rolls-Royce. I noticed that the people who dashed past us, on catching a glimpse of our weird fellow-passenger, demonstrated in various ways in proof of their amazement. But as ill-luck had it, some trifling mischance occurred to our machinery that kept us a quarter of an hour by the side of the road, while the two lady experts were wrestling with the problem. I, in the meantime, remained nominally as guardian of the goat, as there was just an off-chance of her being annoyed at a too long delay. But she took it a great deal more philosophically than we did, and sat beside me with perfect composure, casting apparently disdainful eyes upon the passers-by, and looking like so many people I had known in life—particularly an old schoolfellow who was known as "Goat" H—— by his friends till his death. We were now at the mercy of the passers-by, which are many and of all kinds and from various countries on that frequented road in the space of a quarter of an hour, and the humour of the spectacle was only too painfully obvious. That all these travellers found it so was plain enough. So we were not sorry to get out into the privacy of the farm lanes, and when Nanny was safely deposited in her new home I regretted that I had made so little of my opportunities for cultivating the acquaintance of such an astonishing animal in her home quarters.

Llandrillo stands, like Cynwyd, at the point where a glen in the Berwyn range, though in this case a much more imposing one, opens into the Dee valley. The village hostelry, "The Dudley Arms", resorted to by a few sagacious folk, mostly anglers, sufficiently proclaims the territorial magnate of the region. The village is tolerably, and its environment wholly, picturesque. For the Berwyns at whose feet it nestles are here at their most imposing height. From the glen, which opens out the lofty summits of Cader Berwyn and Moel Sych at its head, the Ceidiog, despite so apparently brief a course, issues with all the vigour of the fair-sized trouting stream it actually is. Up its deep glen and out over the high top of the Berwyn is the walking path into Montgomeryshire and to the famous waterfall known as the Pistyll-Rhaiadr, and I use the adjective advisedly, for it is the finest in England or Wales; but we shall visit it anon.

Very few people, I fancy, ever walk over here, not because the path touches an altitude of about 2400 feet, but because tourists apparently know nothing about it, while the natives have no concern whatever with "the land beyond the mountain". I walked over it once myself and down to the waterfall on the other side and back again, a rather heavy job, some thirty years ago, and well remember how we punished the supper at "The Dudley Arms" on our return. The whole scene from Llandrillo looked charming in the evening sunshine on this our visit, after getting rid of our horned friend. The rich luxuriance of the Dee valley, with its radiant meadows and noble groves of oak and ash and sycamore, spread past the village to the narrowing gateway of the glen. The mountains loomed high and imposing above us, in all the witchery of shadow and sunlight cast over them by the decline of day. For we had left the car at the village, had tea at the Vicarage, and were enjoying a walk across the fields up the Ceidiog valley to call at a farmhouse on some small matter concerned with Octavia's poultry-yard. Our way lay across some level pasture fields, all aglow in their fresh verdure under the evening sky, a ripening clover field wafted its sweet scents upon the air. A rustic bridge crossed the Ceidiog, its waters chafing white upon the rocks or rippling in amber stream over gravelly shallows.

We passed into the farmyard of our quest in company with half a dozen cows on their way to the milkpail—of that cross type between black Welsh and shorthorn, and the rather varied patterns incidental to the mixture, so common in these parts. The inevitable pair of collies, that enliven the approach to every Welsh farmhouse and make it a thing of dread to the dog-shy, dashed at us in the usual paroxysms of fury, as if blood alone would satisfy their rage. But our ladies knew their measure. The bark of the Welsh collie is a lot worse than his bite—fortunately, or Wales would be uninhabitable. Quite unlike his fellow-lodger, the Welsh bull, who is apt to be on you before you know where you are and without any preliminaries—if you are fool enough, that is to say, to go into the same field with him. The fisherman cannot well avoid this on occasions, so it is the fisherman he chiefly hunts, or used to hunt. It is the collie, indeed, who ensures the safety of his master if the bull turns ugly, for with a dog at his hocks, he becomes harmless for attack.

The little farmhouse was quite interesting, thick-walled and of solid stone all whitewashed. It was covered by a flag roof of grey slatestone, and showed in front a gabled porch, over which was carved the date 1671. The situation, too, was all in keeping. A low wooded hill rose behind the homestead, and just beyond it the Ceidiog came leaping out of cavernous sylvan depths to prattle in the evening sunshine past the front of the house and over the smooth green pastures whence the cows came. The interior, too, was all in harmony. While my companions went about their business, I sat in the old-fashioned kitchen where mysterious saucepans fizzled on the hob. Black oak rafters supported the ceiling, plates and pewters shone on oak dressers, and a grandfather's clock most appropriately ticked away the passing hours. A pleasant-looking young woman remained to do the honours and cheer my brief solitude, and never for a moment did I suppose that she had any English worth mentioning. I was pondering on the sad limitations of my colloquial Welsh, when to my surprise she broke out in quite easy English. This was the war! Even up here in the mountains. For my fair friend, it transpired, had nursed in a war hospital in London for a couple of years, while her husband, one of two brothers on this farm, was away at the front. She was perfectly content to be in her native mountains again, like most of the rural Welsh. These people don't find their villages dull like their English equivalents, nor have any desire to leave them. No movement for " brightening village life " seems to be in agitation or to be required in Wales. They do all that for themselves, though their tastes and mentality are of course quite different from those of their Saxon neighbours.

Wales, it must be remembered, is a curiously proportioned country. It would surprise most people, I am sure, to hear that just about half the entire population live in one of the twelve counties, to wit, Glamorganshire, and that too not an exceptionally large one. Again, the notion seems quite common that all South Wales is a chaos of mines, factories, and smoke. Now of the six South Wales counties only one, Glamorgan, and a small patch of Carmarthen are tainted at all with industrial life. The rest of them are as clear and sweet as Herefordshire. I should like to say, furthermore, that for a high average of beauty in mountain, stream, and valley these five counties as a whole are the nearest approach to that of North Wales of any region in Great Britain, save the English Lake district, south of the Scottish Highlands. And, fortunately, as I hold for myself, I have been privileged, for I hold it as a great privilege, to gather in a longish life sufficient knowledge of my native country to indulge in such comparisons, not odious surely in this case, but interesting. Moreover, I feel tolerably sure that any one with the like equipment and free from those local prejudices which are praiseworthy but stultifying for the purpose in hand, would agree with me.

I was surprised on returning to Wales in these post-war years to find the old home-staying instinct among the youth of the country people so little shaken. It seemed to me that in those four shattering years, the intense localism, with the younger generation at least, must have given way; that the scattering all over the face of the earth of these young men, rubbing shoulders as they did with people of every description and many races, sharing their lives and their dangers, must surely have upset the old content with the limitations and simple diversions of a Welsh mountain valley.

But I am told on all sides by those who have best reason to know that life has returned very much to its old grooves. There are perhaps more local Eisteddfods and more sheep-dog trials, more village concerts and acting of Welsh plays, and more football than of old. And these entertainments are not promoted as they would be in Sussex or Hampshire by the squire, the parson, and those " village gentry " who swarm in the Home Counties at any rate, but always by the people themselves, for the Welsh language, of course, plays a great part in all these functions. Wales, again, is a land of small farmers of, say, 30 to 150 acres; the exceptions being negligible. A curious custom too has always prevailed which one would think the war must surely have dissipated, yet still, I am told, holds good. This consists in the farmer's son working for his father without wages, only getting such little presents from time to time as seems good to the parental generosity to bestow, and these are very modest. But then it is well understood that when the young man takes a wife, his father sets him up in a farm. Theoretically the money that otherwise would be given in wages is put in the bank against his son's start in life. This is, of course, a most admirable system. It sounds almost Utopian and too good for this modern world. But it is a widespread tradition and custom in North Wales, and, *mirabile dictu*, has survived the war. Imagine a labour agitator or a trade union boss advising his dupes to follow such a sound course. Away with such thrift! Big wages, short hours, free expenditure, with the dole to fall back upon! The Welsh tenantry were never high rented. The Welsh Land Commission of 1895 cleared the air once and for all of any such political fables. Great numbers, of course, like farmers elsewhere, have willingly or of necessity bought their farms. This is not the panacea the townsman with his unpractical sentimental outlook fancies it to be. But it will be more often, I think, an advantage to thrifty small farmers like those of Wales than to larger men who find the interest of the purchase money, whether borrowed or withdrawn from capital, equal to or more than the rent, superadded to all the other obligations of a landowner. So the labourer class in North Wales is of necessity a very small one indeed. If a farmer have two sons working with him at home, one of them looks to inherit the farm. For the Welsh tenantry are very tenacious of their holdings, and many have been seated in the same farm for generations, some of them since the Civil Wars. A young Welshman, again, will work on the family farm as of course, and work with a will, but he won't often engage as a labourer for another employer in the case of there being no opening for him at home, as is so often done in other countries of small farms. This is a matter of pride, of caste feeling, if you like!

Despite its stronger flavour of Calvinism, the chapel seems to have lost less influence of late years in Wales than in England. Attendance on Sunday is still more or less incumbent on the farmers' and country tradesmen's sons and daughters, while special weekday preachings, combined with the accompaniment of much vocal music, are very distinctly regarded as ceremonies to be attended, and may fairly be held as one of the ingredients that "brighten village life". They would not, I fear, be regarded as adding to the gaiety of a Sussex village! In what proportions the sermons, the music, and the social amenities of these frequent gatherings contribute to their popularity, it is not for me to guess. But there is no doubt that such exercises play an infinitely larger part in Welsh rural life than on the other side of the border, far more too than they do in Scotland, where, despite the Puritan tradition, scarcely more time is spent in such things nowadays than in England. While the Welsh Sunday is, I think, more rigidly observed than in any part of present-day southern Scotland known to me, yet I am old enough to remember when whistling on the Sabbath north of the Tweed really was held as a sin by the lower sort. Education is more popular than ever in Wales, and really does seem to be greatly valued by the country people. More of the farmer's children than ever travel daily by train to Bala, Dolgelly, or Barmouth, or other secondary schools. Yet it does not seem to make these children grow up discontented with housework or farm life, as is the case elsewhere, or fill them with a craving after shop counters or typewriting offices or other such exalted and intellectual positions. There really does seem, too, to be a love of knowledge for its own sake. But the lore gathered at these schools by children thus eager must surely brighten the winter evenings of many a farmhouse now and to come, to put the most limited construction upon it. One thing seems quite certain, namely, that the present generation at this rate will more than overtake the mental equipment of their spiritual guides—the Nonconformist ministers—unless the latter hurry up and make a great stride in this respect. The greater advance in liberal views of the once bigoted Free Church in Scotland may be fairly attributed to the infinitely better all-round education they get at the Scottish Universities, usually the same as that of their Established brethren of the kirk. The narrower system of training in Wales may so far have met the needs of the Welsh Nonconformists, but I cannot imagine that it will so do much longer, though for that matter I do not suppose many of my English readers will care twopence about it one way or the other! One may remember, however, that Scottish Calvinism, now so greatly mellowed, arose long ago from a hatred of prelates, liturgies, and ritual, while Welsh Calvinism, now much less modified than the other, sprang in comparatively recent times, not from hatred, but from the neglect of bishops and parsons, and for a long time clung more or less to the forms of the old Church.

There is no question but that the mentality of the lower orders in Wales is much brighter than that of their Saxon equivalents. Mr. Baring-Gould knew Wales well, while he had spent a long life as an efficient country parson, first in East Anglia, then as parson and squire in his own county of Devon. This is what he writes of the Welsh :

> "No one can fail to be impressed with the intellectual superiority of the Welsh peasant to the English country bumpkin. The Welsh of the labourer and small farmer class are brighter, quicker, keener than those occupying the same position in England. He reads more, above all thinks more. He leads an inner life of thought and feeling, he is more impulsive and more sensitive. He is more susceptible to culture, more appreciative of what is poetical and beautiful, and does not find in buffoonery the supreme delight of life."

The lower Welsh, as every one knows, are supposed to be untruthful. Does any one who has had a normal experience of the same class in England really imagine it to be veracious. Of course not ! The gossip of a country village pays scarcely any regard to truth ! Or, again, listen to the ladies discussing their domestics over the teacups. Deceit is one of the main burdens of their tale. Everywhere there are reasons back in the past for the neglect of truth in the class that are now our masters, whether in England or Wales ! Fortunately, however, nearly all in rural Wales have a stake in the country with the Conservative tendencies that involves, however Liberal they may for the moment continue to vote. It is impossible that they could ever be found in the ranks of the extremists, or disposed to hand over their land, their stock, and not least, their religion to the raucous, atheistical Glasgow industrial.

There are two roads from Corwen to Bala—one to the north of the river and mostly removed from it, switchbacking over the toes of the abutting mountains. The other is of the nineteenth century, the one we are now on, keeping most of the way to the south of the Dee, and nearly always within

BALA LAKE

sight of its lovely reaches. Passing Cynwyd and Llandrillo, it clings to the feet of the Berwyns, whose high crests peep out betimes above the woodlands that clothe so much of their lower slopes, beautify so many stretches of the winding road and give infinite charm with their overhanging foliage to the river's restless and ever-changing streams, as they curve from one side to the other of Edeyrnion's delightful vale. Trout, salmon, and grayling all flourish in these pellucid waters, the salmon travelling into Bala Lake and up the many tributaries that feed it. At Llanderfel, the modern mansion of Palè stands conspicuous above the road amid up-lying parklands that sixty years of woodland growth have brought into harmony with the surrounding scenery. Palè is interesting as the abode of Queen Victoria for a week when she visited Wales in 1889. At Llanderfel, too, the road swerves to the right across the river, and three miles on it passes Rhiwlas, one of the notable old country seats of North Wales. Thence over the turbulent Treweryn, the largest tributary of the Dee, which gathers into its rocky bed the waters of a wide and wild mountain area, till the spacious main street of the countrified little town of Bala leads you on to the shores of its famous lake.

CHAPTER VII

A WILD DAY IN THE MOUNTAINS

THREE principal routes diverge west and north at Corwen: firstly, the one to Bala, dealt with in the last chapter, with its alternative across the river; secondly, the continuation of the Holyhead road, which makes the long drag over the bleak uplands of Cerrig-y-Druidion; and lastly, that which strikes due north, crosses the low gap in the Dee's northern wall by Gwyddelwern, and, joining the upper waters of the Glwyd, runs on through that famous vale to Ruthin, Denbigh, and Rhyl. It was the middle one of the three, the Holyhead road itself over Cerrig-y-Druidion, which gave us the start on this occasion for an enterprise we had been for some time meditating. For, after traversing the almost level, semi-wild, and always windy watershed from Cerrig westward for some six miles to Pentre Voelas, there is a sharp drop, beyond which all the mountains of Snowdonia seem massed against the sky. Not as they appear from the Berwyns, cutting a distant skyline, but one seems here to have suddenly passed into their majestic presence, far away in reality though they yet be. But I am indulging here in the memory of sunny hours and peaceful days in the long ago, for on this occasion there was neither sun nor elemental peace.

Now from the western edge of this aforesaid plateau, one may say, roughly, that wild moors and lesser mountains spread far and wide in all directions, threaded here and there by narrow strips of inhabited valley—to Bala, to Festiniog, to Snowdon itself. It is in fact the beginning, in the wider sense, of Snowdonia. When the Welsh retreated before English armies, as they so often had to do in old days, they must have felt pretty safe when they got this far! We had all three of us crossed these wilds at various times by the various rough roads that traversed them. But there was one of them running from Pentre Voelas by Yspytty-Ivan to Bala marked on the maps as a second-class road which none of us knew. For myself, I had always been rather curious to see Yspytty-Ivan, which, by the way, signifies the " hospital of St. John ", not on historical or archæological grounds, for there was nothing much of either in this out-of-the-way mountain village. It was merely, I think, its isolated position on the map that had always appealed to me.

The day, for a wonder, broke and remained fine, if you can bring a hurricane under that definition. But the wind had not begun to do its worst or anything like its worst when we left home. We had crossed the Alwen valley and turned westward up that of its tributary the Geirw, passed the woody demesne of Maesmore, and begun the long climb thence of five or six miles to Cerrig-y-Druidion, when we really faced the blast and began to realize what we were in for. It was impossible, for instance, to linger at that bend in the road cut into the hillside which looks sheer down over tree-tops to the Geirw sporting far below in the leafy dingles of Garthmeilio, as had been my general habit. For it was difficult to keep one's eyes open at all, so vicious was the wind. Across the Cerrig-y-Druidion plateau it howled unchecked from the Snowdon mountains, at heaven knows how many miles an hour. The long, moor-ish pastures and open heaths spread in gentle undulations to the right as far as one could see, and to the left, till in the distance they rose into lofty green hills which looked down beyond into the Dee valley; while the little Geirw, now nearing its source, prattled gently near us through flats of rushes, of tussocky moor-grass, patchy heather, and wild cotton plant. The two inns of Cerrig-y-Druidion, for there is not much else there, stood up gaunt and bare ahead of us, as the straight road forged along towards them.

Borrow, who had walked up here from Llangollen on his way to Snowdon, had a great time at " The Lion ", and most highly commended it. But this was exactly seventy years ago, and it had smartened up not a little even since I had last darkened its doors. On entering he made the landlady a long-set speech, couched in terms of high-flown courtesy, for he was always a man of extremes. She must have been something of a character herself, as she caught the spirit at once and retorted in the same theatrical strain, with many profound curtseys, and the two were mutually pleased with one another. Moreover, she gave her visitor an admirable dinner served by her pretty daughter, and Borrow spent the evening with the pair in the sanctum behind the bar, varied by disputations with the village doctor, who also pleased him vastly. As we beat along in the teeth of the wind the half-dozen farther miles of high treeless plateau country to Pentre Voelas, at its farther edge, it amused me to recall the author of "L'Avengro" plodding along it on that fine August morning with a vagrant Dublin fiddler, bribing him to play Orange tunes, while he himself with his portentous memory sang the blood-curdling words, till the wretched man almost cried for mercy to his outraged feelings.

At Pentre Voelas, again, there is little more than the roomy, old-fashioned hotel, with the further attraction of some fine trees about it—scarce objects on this long, bleak stretch of road, and in truth they were waving their arms wildly enough in the gale. Here, too, comes in the long road over the Hiræthog wilderness, from the north-east and Denbigh. I travelled its rough surface on a cycle (nominally) in the 'nineties, and have a vivid recollection of its wild beauty and protracted solitude, and the rapture with which I hailed this hostelry, though obviously on nothing like such good terms with itself as now. Our Holyhead road now drops sharply into another country, where it crosses the upper Conway valley, and thence by Bettws-y-coed to Capel-Curig. We left it here and turned left-handed along a suspiciously indifferent byway, though plainly announced at the cross-roads as leading to that sequestered place of euphonious name—Yspytty-Ivan, our first stage. I may say at once that this, like most Welsh names, is not pronounced as the unsophisticated Saxon might assume from the text. "Sputty-eevan" is the only rendering that would get the faintest recognition should he ever find himself in difficulties about the way there, which is not, however, likely. We should by rights have been here confronting most of the highest mountains in Wales. But all that was visible to-day was some dim confused shapes, a little blacker only than the black misty skies among which they loomed.

We got along quite well over the three or four miles of switchback lane through which the inhabitants of Yspytty-Ivan escape into the outer world. As we skirted a narrow valley of hay meadows and pasture fields, down which the infant Conway danced over its stony bed, the village of our immediate quest, dark and grey-looking, came into view, bestriding the stream beneath its ancient church. Every vestige of light had now left the sky which hung over the earth like a dull, sombre, leaden pall. The wind blew right in our teeth, harder and colder than ever, if that were possible. I was sorry we came. We were all sorry. But Bala was now rather nearer than Corwen, by the map about twenty miles, and at Bala there would be peace and a sheltered highway home before the wind. But what lay between us and it by way of a road none of us knew, though Myfanwy was cheerful and sanguine as ever. As we crossed the stone bridge and paused in the little village street to ask what sort of a trail was ahead of us, Myfanwy seemed satisfied by the character given it—of course, in her native tongue. But then one road was very much the same as another to our young pilot, and the demeanour of her informant and some stray snatches of his oration didn't strike me as at all encouraging. Octavia, to be sure, had been to Yspytty-Ivan before, but that had been the limit of her trip. She had come here to buy an animal of some sort, I believe it was a goat—and now I come to think of it, *the* goat, whose mentality was assuredly a credit to its native village. She now shouted to me from the front seat—for hearing was difficult—that the church was worth seeing and that perhaps I would like to stop and have a look at it. I took this, however, as an untimely jest and let it pass. Frankly, I felt rather homesick. I knew the country ahead of us in a general way pretty well, rather too well, and it wasn't of the kind that twenty years, nor yet a thousand years, makes any difference to, but I didn't know the road—not this road. I wished

I did. I am glad now that I didn't, for we should certainly have turned back.

In no long time after climbing out of the village by a lane of rather ominous promise, we were in the wilds. Yspytty-Ivan civilization had made but slight progress westward in all the centuries. In fact our road very soon became the only sign of it, and that but an indifferent sample. It was of the pre-Macadam type, and as there is no one alive who remembers the pre-Macadam period in this blest isle, one's thoughts travel for a comparison to some other countries that have not yet arrived at it. Mine did, as we laboured against the blast through the gloom of this appalling June day, as it was up here at any rate. Sometimes we were between grassy wheel-ruts, sometimes on loose shingle, again on soft and slippery mud, of dark, boggy texture. Occasional interludes that must have been attended to within the last few years from time to time buoyed our hopes, only to be dashed on rounding the next fold of the hill.

Close by us on our left, in a shallow grassy trough, the peaty waters of the Conway, now but a mountain brook, foamed and gurgled over their rocky bed. We were to be in its near company for miles, and only to lose it in its bleak source. Our road, just keeping the lower slope of the folding hills, curved with the curve of the stream. I have alluded to our progress as struggling on, which may seem inapplicable to motoring. But, as a matter of fact, the wind was so terrific that more than once we thought we were over! What with that and the parlous surface of the road, though none of the gradients luckily were very steep, our progress was pretty slow and laboured, and the consumption of oil no doubt out of all proportion to the mileage. I heard Octavia inquire anxiously of Myfanwy whether she thought the petrol would see us out of all this, and Myfanwy said she only hoped so. A ghastly thought! Moreover, we were all clad for driving on an ordinary coolish summer day. It was dark and boisterous winter up here, for we were now 1400 to 1600 feet above sea-level. There wasn't a house for miles and miles. Nor was it petrol only. I thought of the hundred and one little mishaps to which the best conducted cars are liable, even on normal highways, and here were we plunging along a very abnormal one without a notion what was coming next. The afternoon was wearing away, so far as a grey and leaden afternoon in high summer can be said to wear away.

But to-day wasn't high summer, save on the calendar—it was mid-winter! There was no mist. The wild moors immediately around us, and the mountains bounding our fairly near horizon to the left and ahead of us, laid bare all their secrets with uncompromising dourness. For not a gleam of light nor colour touched them anywhere, nor even a passing cloud relieved the leaden grimness of both the heavens and the earth. It was really rather splendid, this utter desolation, if the wind had not been blowing quite so many miles an hour. Fortunately this made rain unlikely—on the brink of tears though the heavens always were throughout this humid season. For that would have amounted to a blizzard, and I knew what that meant even in summer on our British mountains by experience. It was unthinkable. Yet at one time we heard thunder muttering far away into the wind's eye in the direction of the Ardudwy mountains, and quailed—at least I did. Even the birds were invisible. The peewits, so plentiful and so irrepressible, had declined a contest with so fierce a gale and no doubt were snuggling somewhere in the bracken or the heather, while the grouse, abundant enough on these moors, never showed a feather or sounded a note. Only an occasional gull or crow went tearing over before the gale. We encountered life but once, and that in the shape of a pair of work-horses in charge of a young farmer bestriding one of them. These ingenuous beasts had apparently never before seen a car: for they bounced off the road like panic-stricken thoroughbred colts, and started to caper past us on their hind legs, to the very natural discomfort of a horseman riding bareback. What they had been doing so far out on the moor from the enclosures of Yspytty-Ivan I cannot imagine!

In due time we crossed what was left of the Conway, a mere leaping rivulet, spouting down through the bogs and heather from its parent lake near by. We got just a glimpse of Llyn Conway itself as we topped a rise, but little above us and not a mile away—its chill surface swept by the wind against its low boggy shores, the very incarnation of desolation. Yet from the heights towards Festiniog, on a sunny day it makes a bright spot in the very heart of one of the wildest tracts in Wales. Two or three miles on, a lonely finger-post struck a note of kinship with the outer world. Actually it had none whatever, as it merely announced the arrival of a rough road, like our own, from distant Penmachno. Still it cheered us a little, though the country for miles ahead looked most unfriendly, and the road if anything got worse. Yet on a nice sunny morning on bicycles, or pony-back, or on foot, how happy we should have been here. As it was, we were chilled through and pretty miserable and aching with uncertainty as to our fate. We reached the junction of the moor road from Festiniog without mishap. This was the point of an angle, sharper than a right angle, which our route from Yspytty-Ivan to Bala described. Hitherto we had been skirting the Meignant mountains on our left hand. We now turned sharp to the left and skirted their farther bounds, while the Arenig range began to loom up more closely on our right.

Near the junction of the two roads, though not visible from it and lying in a cup of hills, is Llyn Morwynion, or the Lake of the Maidens. It is the scene of a famous Welsh legend and therefrom derives its euphonious name. For at some dim period the men of Ardudwy, which under the old divisions is the country just west of this across the mountains and skirting the sea, ran short of wives or else conceived an unholy desire for more than the then regulation number. So they cast their eyes towards the distant Vale of Clwyd, then as now the garden of North Wales, rich and populous. This fair land they took by surprise, and, in short, repeated the achievement of the rape of the Sabines. They had very nearly got home, so runs the story, with their captives when they found the gentlemen of the Vale of Clwyd, who had recovered from their surprise and followed them across the Hiraæthog and the moors we are now traversing, upon their backs. After a fierce encounter, the men of Ardudwy were put to utter rout or slain. But the strange part of the story is that the captured maidens, rather than return to the banks of the Clwyd and its matrimonial prospects, all jumped into the neighbouring lake and were drowned. Their precise motives vanished with them. It would almost appear as if the status of women in the Vale of Clwyd was intolerable. That the fascinations of the men of Ardudwy can have proved so devastating in, let us say, forty-eight hours is incredible. But there is the story " whatever ", and the lake has been called Llyn Morwynion ever since. Long ago I used occasionally to fish it, rowed about by an old man from Festiniog who either owned or borrowed its only boat. He was a bard too, and was very fond of the old story, and saw great visions no doubt in the lake's dark depths as we drifted over its rippling surface. It is not dreary, however, like Llyn Conway, but wildly picturesque, being surrounded by hills, above which the Manod mountains raise their rocky crowns to quite a noble height. My boatman-bard—peace to his ashes—is long dead. He sent me an Englyn on the publication of one of my books: I have it still. Modesty has forbidden me circulating a translation of it among my friends.

Borrow, in walking through this wild country from Festiniog to Bala in hot August weather, missed Morwynion somehow; apparently he was oblivious to its story. But later on, tired and thirsty, he cast himself down on the banks of what must have been Llyn Treweryn and dreamed dreams of the mythical afranc of Welsh legend, not the afranc of fact the beaver, but the suppositious crocodile which the oxen of Huw the Mighty dragged out of the lake. He was greatly struck with the solitude through which his road lay. He didn't like it, for he met no one to harangue or cross-examine for hours on end, and, worse still, no sign of a public-house! He joins our road here in spirit, but what a contrast—tramping thirstily as he was under a broiling sun, and we driving through the gloom in a Ford car against a bitter gale. What would Borrow have said to the car!

But to be precise, we no longer faced the gale, it merely smote us sideways and did its best to knock us off the track into the soft boggy ditches that mostly bordered it. Moreover, we had fully counted on this road, though a moorland one and little used, between Festiniog and Bala being an improvement.

But it was not. It was worse if anything, till it touched civilization, and that was a long way off yet; moreover, the question of petrol was getting serious. It was more on the down grade than the other, but so rough and slippery and in places so narrow and cut up by watercourses that we had to push along warily, the ladies, half perished with cold, relieving one another at the wheel. We had some eight miles yet before we were out of the wood—or rather out of the bogs. However, we passed a deserted mine, including an empty cottage, the apotheosis of desolation—so the risk of a night in the open on this blasted heath was robbed of its extremist terrors. Still we were unfeignedly thankful when the outposts of civilization showed their first faint signs, with the Ford car still sound in wind and limb and its ammunition unexhausted.

We had by now sidled gradually down into the Treweryn valley, and incidentally from 1600 to 1200 feet altitude. The great mountains of Moel Lyfnant and Arenig-fawr rose majestically in front of us to the right, and close at hand, the latter's lesser sister, the Arenig-fach, topped the Meignant mountains on our left. We were now well in view of the gap between the two ranges, south of which lay the open country and a good road to Bala. We didn't breathe quite freely, however, till we had actually touched the farthest outpost and brought the long-suffering Ford to a welcome halt at a wayside cottage, standing amid small stone-walled enclosures.

The question of refreshment had, I am sure, occurred to nobody. We were all sufficiently preoccupied. For when you are holding the tiller, so to speak, in a rough sea and being blown inside out at the same time, a trifle like afternoon tea hardly counts among the possibilities. But at this rather desolate little homestead the ruling passion of her sex asserted itself, and Octavia pulled up sharp and declared she wasn't going another yard till the forgotten tea-basket had been emptied. A young woman with a troop of children issuing from the premises solved the question of hot water, and we got out to stretch our stiff limbs, while the kettle boiled and the housewife, who was evidently rather starved for lack of conversational opportunity, poured out her life-story to the ladies. As she had spent her entire existence in this rather forlorn back-of-beyond, her career was more picturesque in the abstract than thrilling in detail. But what did rather thrill me, though unfortunately, as I admit, not till we got home, was the fact that we should have quite inadvertently finished our trip through the wilderness on this wild day at the very cottage where Borrow, hot, thirsty, and tired, completed his tramp through it. For this was Tai-Heirion (the long houses)—a modest enough cot now, though even still marked on the map.

" A respectable woman," writes Borrow, " was standing in the yard. I went up to her and enquired the name of the place.

" ' Tai-Heirion Mignaint,' said she. ' Look over that door and you will see T. H., which letters stand for it.'

" I looked, and upon a stone which formed the lintel of the middlemost door I read T. H. 1630. I looked long and steadfastly at the inscription, my mind full of thoughts of the past.

" ' Many a year has rolled by since these houses were built,' said I, as I sat down on a stepping-stone.

" ' Many indeed, sir,' said the woman, ' and many a strange thing has happened here.'

" ' Did you ever hear of Oliver Cromwell ? ' said I.

" ' O yes, sir, and of King Charles too. The men of both have been in the yard and have baited their horses, aye, and have mounted their horses from the stone on which you sit.' "

Borrow rather unkindly remarked : " I suppose they were hardly here together ! '

" ' No, no, sir, they were bloody enemies. The long houses now make one farmhouse. I am the mistress of it and my husband is the master. Can I bring you anything, sir ? '

" And she brought me a delicious bowl of fresh milk and some water."

Borrow had been drinking out of what he calls the Twerin all the way down the valley, and was loudly singing the praises of cold water on this long, hot walk. He did not know at Tai-Heirion that there was a public-house only a mile ahead ! But he soon found it out, and sat down in the bar-parlour, where a Methodist farmer discussed the shortcomings of the vicar and informed Borrow that there was no safe road to Heaven at all except through the Calvinist-Methodist persuasion. Borrow must, in truth, have been very tired, for he didn't even reply to him, but merely got up and went on his way to Bala. Here he put up at the "Lion", then and within easy memory (I know nothing of it now) one of the best inns in Wales and famous for its ale. Borrow put his foot in it at once. For, being still thirsty, he ordered yet another pint before his dinner and rashly assumed that they got their ale from Llangollen. This was a deadly insult and started a characteristic Borrovian dialogue.

Warmed by the tea and vastly relieved at leaving the tempest, the mountain roads, and all the untoward possibilities that haunted us, behind, we soon passed by the roomy inn standing in a meadow among a grove of trees, where the arrogant Calvinistic farmer had been fortunate enough to find Borrow in a chastened frame of mind. I had known the house of old, and indeed had once spent a night there to fish the Treweryn, which winds through green, boggy flats before the door, and also to climb the " Big " Arenig. Coming up from Bala it had always seemed a lonely and romantic spot enough, despite the fact that the single track line from Festiniog runs down, throughout its latter course, by the Treweryn valley, and there is a little station on it here called Arenig, after the mountain that towers above. This is the wildest stretch of railroad travel in England or Wales, and contains the longest span in either country between two stations. For between Arenig here and Trawsfynydd, there is no stop nor any call for one. It is continuous, uncultivated solitude, with hills and mountains upon either hand, a most impressive bit of travelling which no one should miss. It used to take nearly twenty-five minutes, and Bradshaw will doubtless still reveal it as its " record " in this particular.

The great mountain of Arenig-fawr rises here abruptly and imposingly to the skies, its rock-fronted crown touching an altitude of 2800 feet. To-night it looked merely stern and sombre. Steep as it is, I found my way to the top, I remember, on a glorious summer evening without any difficulty, though not being climbed by tourists there was no trail. As the king of all the mountains south of Snowdonia and east of Cader and the Arans, it overlooks nearly all North Wales, while, as I have already noted, it is often taken for Snowdon from a distance, far away from Snowdon though it be, and 700 feet lower. Then the view from it includes Bala Lake, its long trail mirrored in the middle distance. Under its shadow, too, is Llyn Arenig, a roundish tarn of about a mile in circumference, lapping the base of the almost precipitous south-eastern shoulder of the mountain, which looks most imposing from the lake's farther shores. Its waters are most beautifully clear—indeed, Bala town, I fancy, lays them under tribute. I once spent a long and balmy day up here in May in futile endeavours to beguile its trout. We had been warned that they only rose about twice a year, but we treated such a tale as stuff. But it wasn't; it was quite true and this was not one of the two days! But we lay about on the shore, smoking and dreaming, while the lake rippled beautifully and melodiously at our feet in the soft west wind as we watched the light, fleecy clouds fitfully caressing the top of the Arenig and passing on. We found compensation for our empty creels in that delightful sense of peace, that utter aloofness from the world and almost eloquent silence which hangs about a mountain tarn as nowhere else, if you stay with it a sufficient number of hours to feel its spirit. And nobody, of course, ever does that but an angler and a very occasional artist, though the painters of this generation seem to have abandoned all attempts at uplifting scenery. Chelsea seems to shy at it. Perhaps its presence is a silent rebuke to their fads and freaks. It doesn't lend itself to their weird handling so readily as a chalk road up a Down or a sandpit in Surrey!

But a Welsh tarn can be frightfully gruesome on occasions, as when a mountain mist descends upon your solitude, and fleecy clouds curl over its black waters and wave their lace-like veils against the gloomy precipices that overhang so many of these high tarns in Wales. The modern poet seldom, I fancy, gets to a tarn, whether in Wales or elsewhere. As the artist mostly paints, so he mostly sings within the fifty-mile radius of London. Wordsworth, unique among all English poets in intimacy with the nature which he interpreted, knew them well.

> "Then sometimes does a leaping fish
> Send through the tarn a lonely cheer;
> The crags repeat the raven's croak,
> In symphony austere;
> Thither the rainbow comes—the cloud
> And mists that spread the flying shroud
> And sunbeams; and the sounding blast
> That if it could would hurry past."

The raven's croak is no figure of speech to-day. Above the higher tarns of Wales the crags still echo his hoarse cries. I remember the sudden change from sunshine to mist and gloom once having a most startling effect on a very youthful gillie of mine in this very district. I was stopping at Llanywchllyn, the village situated at the head of Bala Lake, as its name implies, and used occasionally to walk over the hills to fish a grim little tarn tucked away under the eastern precipices of Aran Benllyn. On one occasion I wanted a boy to carry my waders and brogues, and made interest with the village dominie to provide me with one. An urchin of nine or ten sufficient for the light duties required was produced, *ultra vires*, I fear, for it was not a holiday, but no doubt selected with discretion. To reach the lake I had always to make a considerable cast off from the direct line on account of a black bull whose range was unlimited, his eye keen, and temper hasty, and who made the mountains echo from time to time with his minatory roars. My urchin had, of course, no English, and what was passing in his mind I could only guess. Perhaps he had no mind—hence his selection for playing the licensed truant from school. His spirits at any rate were maintained throughout the morning by my fairly frequent calls for the landing-net.

But later on the clouds came down upon the tarn, racing low in filmy shrouds against the black precipice of Aran and blotting out the world. The fish, of course, ceased to rise, but persevering in the hope of better times I forgot all about the boy, having no use for the net. When eventually I looked around for him, the wretched "bachen" was nowhere to be seen, and I hunted the shores of that now gloomy tarn filled with horrible forebodings. The landing-net was there plain enough, lying on the bank, at an ominous-looking place, too, where some rocky ledges dropped sheer down into the dark depths. Could the brat be at the bottom of the lake?—appalling thought! I hadn't seen him or thought of him for an hour! There was nothing for it, however, but to make tracks for home, bearing the burden that should have been his, though that was as nought compared to the load I carried on my mind. I didn't even bother about the bull, but with meretricious courage traversed the centre of his beat. To shorten my tale, the miserable brat turned out to be at home safe and sound, and the reaction from anxiety to wrath on my part was great. It transpired that he had become terrified at the lonely and gruesome aspect of the place when the skies descended on it, and left so long to his imaginings had incontinently fled. The schoolmaster was rather severe with him and begged me not to give him his shilling, but I thought that in this particular perhaps I understood the situation better than the pedagogue, who provided me on the next occasion with a stouter-hearted gillie, proof against hobgoblins and supernatural influences. For after all, this was the very spot, according to the poet Spenser, where Timon inspired the youthful Arthur, a very haunt of magic memories.

> "Under the foot of Rauran (Aran) mossy hoar,
> From whence the river Dee as silver clear,
> His tumbling billowes rolls with gentle rore,
> There all my days he trained me up in vertuous lore."

So who knows but that this little Goidel or Iberian, this insignificant representative of a primitive race, may have seen and heard things not revealed to a Saesenog.

But to return to Arenig and the Treweryn valley. A quarry seems to have been recently opened near the little station and destroyed, no doubt, its pristine peace. This last was so great thirty years ago that I remember when a valued domestic in the service of a friend of mine in Corwen married the stationmaster there, she was looked upon as lost to the world and as a pioneer facing the solitude of the fringes of Empire.

The road from Arenig down to Bala along the Treweryn valley displays much of the beauties of this romantic river foaming down its woody ways, though I am not sure whether the railroad traveller coming up from Bala is not on even better terms with it. For that matter I know not a few bits of river scenery where the railroad has all the best of it as opposed to the highway. We left the great mountains looming up behind us—those grouped around the Big Arenig and those of Meignant around Arenig-fach, without, I fear, any regret, and not unthankful that we have escaped without mishap from their sullen jaws! There was no hint of sunset that evening. The mountains merely got dourer and dourer till they sank sullenly into the shroud of night. But by that time we were home!

CHAPTER VIII

LLANRHAIADR AND ITS WATERFALL

LLANRHAIADR-YN-MOCHNANT lies just over the Berwyns and immediately beneath their southern slope. It is only about 8 miles across the range from Llandrillo and the Dee valley for the "hardy pedestrian." I like that good old term, though I read in a paper the other day that it was the baneful mark of the Early Victorian; but neither progress, nor preciosity, has found a substitute. Perhaps none is needed nowadays, as hardly any one walks. But by road or rail the two regions are so remote as to belong almost to two different schemes of existence. Oswestry is here the metropolis, a most efficient one I should imagine, but not very interesting to a stranger. In any case it is no longer in Wales. It was so in former days and an important town of the Marches. In case I may be accused of underrating it, here is what Guto'r Glyn, the famous Bard of Valle Crucis, says of it, which is much more important, as he ended his days there:

"It is the most wealthy of all cities
And the best town from here to Rome.
It is the London of the land of Owain,
Oswestry, friend of Jesus.
With a free school it is bright
And is the town of preachers.
There are metrists and grammarians
Who serve God in a fair temple.
There is the fairest church with noble chalices
And an organ and notable bells.
The best of hosts and merry men
Are the men of the blest monastery.

Best are the women, with becoming hair
And dress, such the women of the town of Oswald.
In it there is merchandise of Cheap
And accord and faithfulness.
A tall Earl is the owner of the noble place."

This really leaves nothing more to be said, and as this translation by Professor Wynne Jones was only printed for the first time the other day and that in the local press, Oswestry has no doubt taken on a pretty good opinion of itself. Whether the fact that the old bard wrote it with an eye to getting off the payment of £5 on his rates may modify their civic exaltation, I cannot say!

But some of Guto'r's pleading is quaint enough. In his youth he was a country dweller, but in his old age give me all the time, he says in effect, "a walled town where there is warmth, timbered houses, wheaten bread, beer and meat. To the stomach of an old person milk is unwholesome." He had no use at all for the rye-bread and buttermilk of his rural youth, though we may be sure that no such fare as that obtained among the merry monks of Valle Crucis who entertained him so frequently. Finally he reminds the burgesses of a predecessor whose poems were considered as good enough payment for taxes, and he hopes these worthies will value his at the same rate. If they gave them as much entertainment as they have given some of us, I am quite sure the town officials would not have dreamed of pressing the old bard for such a trifle!

Llanrhaiadr is quite a large village and gets its name from the Rhaiadr stream which just here breaks out of its own deep valley running down from the Berwyns into the flat vale of the Tanat.

Now Rhaiadr signifies a waterfall and is an unusual name for a river. No doubt the impetuosity with which it plunges down through this narrow gateway into the very streets of the village accounts for its general application, as its course is a short one. But to the traveller through all time Llanrhaiadr is chiefly notable for the cataract four miles up the valley, which is the highest and finest in England or Wales, the Pistyll-Rhaiadr. This suggests tautology, as the first word also means a waterfall, but one rather of the spout order, such as a siphon sends into a tumbler. The fall well merits this emphasis, for it shoots from a wooded cliff some 200 feet high in two clear leaps, that hardly show the single short break in the descent till one is right up against it. What is more, it comes into view and makes a most imposing show as one ascends the vale, long before coming within the hearing of its thunders, or within reach of its spray.

Strangely enough though, as compared with Aber, the Swallow Falls at Bettws, or those of the Mynach at the Devil's Bridge, this one is not greatly visited. For one thing, it is approached by a narrow and twisting road and, though mostly of quite good surface, the problem of passing is sometimes difficult. Then, again, it is far from any tourist centre. Occasional charabancs squeeze themselves up to the Falls in the holiday months, as where do not these juggernauts now penetrate. But they are mostly, I gather, of local enterprise, patronized by local people. Few even of habitual visitors to Wales have seen the Pistyll-Rhaiadr and I am quite sure it would surprise them !—but of this anon.

A branch railway runs up the Tanat valley from Oswestry, with a station at Llanrhaiadr and its terminus at Llangynog, six miles on. A very engaging little line it is too, crossing and recrossing the buoyant, crystal-clear stream for nearly its whole length. And the Tanat, though not well known to fame, is a good-sized river, curving between red banks through broad pasture fields, rippling over stony shallows, spreading in smooth glides over shingly flats or swirling in deep pools. It is notable, as would be gathered at a glance by a countryman, for its grayling and trout, which last, unlike those of its darker and more turbulent neighbour the Dee across the Berwyns, do not cease to rise in early May. When engaged in their pursuit and cultivating that intimacy with a riverside such as that alone can give with this or any other delectable vale, one feels it to be essentially in the Borderland, the land of the Severn and Vyrnwy, a country technically in North Wales, but not wholly, as in the Rhaiadr valley, of it. A region rather, where everywhere the features and the spirit of England and Wales are blended. The hills that border the Tanat valley on the south are not as the tall Berwyns that frown down upon it from the north. They are broken and varied, to be sure, and of about the thousand-feet altitude, rich in colouring with sheep pastures and hanging woods, with grain fields, gorse breaks, heather and ferny crag, and cloven with woody dingles murmurous with falling water. But you feel down here that you have stepped out of typical North Wales into a semi-English country, though there are plenty of its people who have no English. In short, it is Powys-land in the loose, modern sense of the word, of which the great red castle that towers above Welshpool not very far off is the head and symbol.

To some, however, this junction of the Rhaiadr, the typical North Welsh stream, with the Tanat, the typical Border stream, means something more than this. For the angle at Llanrhaiadr was the boundary for generations between upper and lower Powys: Powys Ucha and Powys Isa—between Powys Fadog and Powys Gwywynwyn, held by different chieftains of that Royal line. For just so long, that is to say, as they could keep them against the constant ambitions of the Princes of Gwynedd and more occasional enterprises of those of South Wales, to say nothing of the interference of English kings. Moreover, it was the southern boundary of Glyndwr's property, the commote of Cynllaeth, himself it will be remembered, a scion of the Royal Powysian line. And just below, at Llangedwyn, the Cynllaeth brook from Sycharth falls into the Tanat. So Llanrhaiadr-yn-Mochnant comes into mediæval history as a boundary pregnant with all that word portended in those days when boundaries were pretty serious things. They didn't look after themselves, nor were encroachments generally submitted to arbitration even by Glyndwr's time, as we have seen! But these after all are rather forgotten, far-off things. Llanrhaiadr has a hundred times more claim, to popular notice at any rate, and for which no equipment for appreciating the infinite tangles of Welsh history is necessary.

For it was here in its present vicarage that the Bible was translated into Welsh by its then vicar, afterwards Bishop Morgan of St. Asaph. This really was an epoch-making event.

For the Welsh, like the rest of the country, had been deprived at the Reformation of their old faith and ritual as well as their monasteries, but unlike the English they had been supplied with nothing in its place: nothing, that is to say, within their comprehension. If Henry VIII had undoubtedly done them great secular service by his substitution of well-ordered counties for the disorderly Marcher Lordships, he had done them for the time a great disservice ecclesiastically. For the English ritual and Bible was unintelligible to nearly the whole country. No one has attempted to paint social Wales in the Elizabethan age. It is very obscure. There is no clue as to the percentage of even the Squire class who could speak English. More than a century later Defoe describes, from observation, the Anglesey squires as "talking in Welsh but swearing in English"!

So in the interval, probably half a century, the mass of the people were "in the air", so to speak, as regards religion, and Bishop Morgan came to their rescue while still at Llanrhaiadr, inhabiting the present vicarage, which has been since his day much altered and enlarged. His Bible was published in 1588 and is regarded as a masterpiece by Welsh scholars. "Distinguished by a style natural and clear", says the late Owen Edwards, "with an echo in it of the departing music of the dying literature of the previous century". Morgan had laboured under great opposition. It was naturally regarded as an effective obstacle to the destruction of the Welsh language, which was the aim of nearly all in authority at that period and even till quite recent times. He was cited before Archbishop Whitgift, who afterwards assisted him, for his contumacious endeavours. The extreme Protestant views of the late Elizabethan period, however, prevailed, and the Welsh Bible became a religious force and a literary monument, the importance of which can never be overestimated. Morgan became Bishop of Llandaff and St. Asaph in succession, and, as such, a shining example.

It is felicitous that such a classic spot as Llanrhaiadr should lie in such a romantic setting. In Morgan's time it had five or six daughter parishes and churches in the mountains, and its value being considerable it was generally held by men of culture and status. The present incumbent, though the outside parishes have long been cut off, keeps up the tradition and has contributed much valuable matter to its history. Among his predecessors were Dr. Robert South, the seventeenth-century rhetorician, and Dr. Worthington, author of various works, who was here for thirty-one years and was a great friend of Dr. Johnson. The Doctor visited him in 1774, and together with Boswell and Lord Lyttleton was taken to see the famous waterfall. It was apparently dry weather, and the vicar, it was said, employed some men to make a dam above the falls and let the water down as the distinguished visitors were approaching it. It didn't need much damming up in this past summer! The present dining-room in the vicarage, despite many changes, is still the same room in which Morgan did his great work. In a recent restoration, besides other things in the room, a mantelpiece was brought to light, with Bibles in stone and marble worked into it.

A great Welsh divine has written: "Bishop Morgan not only gave the Welsh people their Bible, but also resuscitated and re-formed the ancient language of the Cymry. Under his magic hand what had been a dying patois became a living and literary speech. The Welsh language was by him recreated and standardized. He took it up rough-hewn and crude and out of it fashioned the majestic and sonorous speech which now conveys the word of God to the Welsh people." The great bishop was the son of a small farmer in the wild country around Yspytty-Ivan, which we adventured under such untoward circumstances in the last chapter. Educated by the chaplain of Gwydyr Castle, he took his degree at St. John's, Cambridge—the same College, oddly enough, which claimed Price, the translator of the Prayer-Book into Welsh.

Though I don't propose in this little tour to say much about church architecture, yet, as the building in which Bishop Morgan preached for ten years, I might mention that Llanrhaiadr Church has a west tower with a ground stage of eleventh century date. The nave, chancel, and chancel aisles are much later, of various ages, and show a good deal of modern restoration. The pulpit has two panels from the one in which the bishop himself preached. It has a strange dedication even for Wales, namely, to St. Dogfan, one of the family of Brychan Brycheiniog, a fifth-century Brython magnate from whom the county of Brecon takes its name. He is said to have had twenty-four sons and twenty-six daughters by three wives, though really that is no great thing for those ancient heroes. The Rev. Silas Evans, the present vicar, to whom I owe many of these particulars, also showed me a spot in the vicarage garden where almost within living memory there stood the remains of a summer-house in which good Bishop Morgan took refuge with his papers against the invasion of importunate parishioners.

Passing through the village and up the narrow winding glen of the Rhaiadr, its beautiful vale soon opens out. The last term is perhaps a misnomer. For scarcely anywhere in its four to five mile course does it leave an acre of level ground in its trough. Always its steep sides fall sharply downwards to the fretting stream. Two parallel ridges rising gradually in height from a few hundred to a thousand or fifteen hundred feet after widening a trifle, draw together at the head of the vale in the rocky cliff barrier which terminates it, and is only parted by the white trail of the cataract. There is nothing of the Severn and Vyrnwy, or the Border atmosphere up here. It is North Wales through and through. The high steep sides of the valley are laced with hedgerows and patched with the bright colours of hayfield and grain crop till they give way to the overhanging moors. Along the road, always just above the stream, are old stone homesteads, embowered in orchards or shady trees, their barns and outbuildings, roofs and walls, all toned by time and weather into mellow greys and browns. Almost everywhere, however, the Rhaiadr fighting its way down its rocky channel is quite hidden beneath avenues of overarching foliage. Here and there a whitewashed cottage pushes its garden patch down to the river edge and exposes the glint of its bright waters, or a short flower-bordered lane turns down to a hand bridge leading to farm or cottage homes on the breast of the opposite hill: for the vale is fairly well peopled.

The narrow valley road, however, is the gentlest of switch-backs and quite good. Half a mile or so before reaching its abrupt termination, the umbrageous character of the gorge gives way and the stream plays among meadowy strips or rough pasture land. The road, too, breaks out and winds between heath, boulders, and stone walls, till it ends at a small farmhouse at the foot of the waterfall, set beside a grove of tall trees—beech and oak, larch, ash, and sycamore, which receives the very spray of the cataract. Indeed, the whole cliff, in all nearly 300 feet high, is wooded to the topmost verge on the near side, though too precipitous to carry so much timber on the farther one. A hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago, when the pioneer visitors and writers found their way up here on horseback with saddle-bags and a guide—Pennant, Cobbett, Bingley, Gilpin, and others—these cliffs were quite naked. It was the Lord Powis of the period who planted them, certainly more than seventy years ago, for Borrow mentions there being wood upon them when he was here.

Now the whole of the country belongs to the families either of Powis Castle or Wynnstay. Sir Watkin owns all but a patch of this Rhaiadr valley. But the story runs that a Lord Powis planted this cliff, at, no doubt, much trouble and expense, and it was subsequently discovered to be on the "Syr Watkin" property. I forget how it ended, but I think a good deal of tenacity was exhibited on both sides. I flinch from any attempt to describe this superb waterfall. I have been privileged to see it on many occasions in the past two summers, and have nearly always been fortunate in finding a good head of water coming over. The stream descends the cliff in two sheer leaps, the break in the middle being so short as to be hardly noticeable a little distance away. The final drop passing under a curious natural arch plunges into a large black quivering pool, with a shelving shingly beach on the lower side. Thence issuing in a series of short leaps for thirty or forty yards more and a fall of perhaps as many feet, it comes to a more perfect peace in yet another pool, in this case amber-coloured, deeper and stiller than the one of its first pause. Looking up from here at the white water falling in such volume from so great a height with a noise of thunder and flinging the spray far and wide, one isn't surprised that Borrow when he stood here was moved to exclaim : " This Rhayader, the grand cataract of North Wales, far exceeds all the cataracts of Great Britain and her neighbouring isles in altitude and beauty ".

The cottage farmhouse, as will have been gathered, still stands at the foot of the falls and supplies the needs of visitors as it did when Borrow came here, talked Welsh with its mistress, drank a bowl of buttermilk—what a man !—and translated into English an englyn on the Pistyll left by a former visitor. I have remarked earlier that Borrow generally stuck to the roads. He certainly did not on this occasion, but, on the contrary, was contemplating what, unaccompanied, would have been a rather foolhardy enterprise. For it was an autumn afternoon, and he was proposing to walk across the pathless, boggy moors above the falls to Bala, fifteen miles distant. Luckily the good woman sent her husband part way with him, who put him on the moorland road, which we shall traverse ourselves later. Thence in the cloudy twilight, grasping his trusty umbrella, as he takes care to tell us, " by the middle, a sure protection against all enemies, dogs, bulls, and footpads ", he plods on and downward to Bala, arriving long after dark at the " White Lion ", where we encountered him, it may be remembered, in our last chapter. He was vastly annoyed, however, at the deterioration of the ale since his last visit, and the absence of his old friend the waiter. But he found by good luck the cultured doctor whom he had fraternized with at Cerrig-y-Druidion, who, sad to say, didn't recognize him, and to forget Borrow in a month must have been a positive feat of absent-mindedness ! In being reminded, however, of the nature of their last talk and the precise words with which it terminated, the forgetful medico pulled himself together and they went at it again.

There is a good inn at Llanrhaiadr where Tanat anglers foregather, which will be a sufficient recommendation to those who understand these matters. Fortunately for me I have friends living up the valley, and from that hospitable vantage-point have had several opportunities of exploring it at leisure. Nor do I believe that in all Wales there is a house more beautifully situated and commanding more entrancing views than Pen-y-Craig. In a country like Wales where noble scenery of every kind displays itself before such countless window-panes, I feel conscious that anything suggestive of comparison is rather futile. Yet for really dramatic situation and poise, I at any rate know nothing quite like it. About half-way up the valley and high up on the mountain-side some 300 feet above the river, the house stands on a ledge partly hewn out of the face of the hill for its solid foundations to rest upon. Of course it is not old. No ancients would have contemplated such a site for a moment. Few moderns, indeed, would have faced the labour of putting up a fairly large stone house on such an eagle's eyrie. But the builders are this long time dead, nor do the labours of their masons, stone-cutters, and waggoners concern their successors who are free to enjoy this wonderful perch.

The drop down to the river below and the valley road has the effect, at least, of the perpendicular, though with just sufficient slope to hold steep pasture fields and hanging woods. Five minutes above is the open mountain. From the windows or the terrace the whole valley, from the high summits of Moel Sych and Cader Berwyn at its head down to its narrow entrance gate behind which Llanrhaiadr lies, unfolds itself. The white veil of the cataract dividing the dark cliff at the valley head two miles away is easily visible. The gorge of the river, smothered in foliage, winds far below through the centre of the picture, with always the music of its waters waging their eternal fight with their broken and rugged bed. The wide hillside rising beyond, sprinkled with little farms and cloven with woody dingles, climbs to the wild high moors above. And away to the south and south-west over these lower hills and beyond Llanrhaiadr spreads away the broken country of latter-day Powisland, the land of the Tanat, the Vyrnwy, the Banw, and the Severn, the land of Welshpool, of Powis Castle, of Montgomery, of Careinion.

It was early in June when I came up here this past summer. For taking some liberty with the order of my progress in these pages needs no apology, as it is of no consequence to them whatever. So the memories of warm summer days in the preceding year were not destroyed by those of this one: I am still privileged to recall the valley as bathed in sunshine. For there was a blessed interlude of something like it for a week, and if the wind at times blew coldish for midsummer, one is apt to overlook that in the retrospect. The atmosphere, too, was wondrous clear, and that alone makes days spent on this roof of the world memorable. At Plâs-Coed, as I have more than once set down here, you could see most of Wales north of the Berwyns within a quarter of an hour's easy climb. With much the same measure of effort from here, you may see much of Wales south of the Berwyns, and of Shropshire too. The two spots were almost the complements of one another—forty miles apart by train or motor, and about eight or nine as the crow flies! But Pen-y-Craig is itself from 1100 to 1200 feet above sea-level, so a very short walk up the hill at the back of it sets one at an altitude of 1500 or 1600 feet. This eastern wall of the Rhaiadr valley, as also the opposing and western one, are in fact flankers thrown out southward by the main Berwyn range, here at its highest. To slip up here after breakfast on a bright morning before the weather had a chance to break was a simple matter without even disturbing the day's programme.

But chiefly in the evenings it was a pleasant custom to take the moors, which are here virtually illimitable, rather more seriously. For the main range to which these flankers climb and all so near us here to the north make an imposing procession of heights, Moel Sych (the dry bare hill), Bryn Berwyn, and Cader Fronwen, and thence on to the rather lower heights to the eastward which look down on Corwen, the Ceiriog, and the Trystian.

But there was a rather longer evening walk which used to end on a still better pinnacle among these lesser heights. This was across the valley and on up to the summit of Y Garn, which almost touches 2000 feet. For a pleasant pathway crossed the river by the keeper's house, where a fox cub, fresh from the maternal lair in the high breast of Moel Sych, entertained all callers with the sangfroid of an old "bagman". A trout of monstrous size, too, compared with the little fellows, among whom, and doubtless on whom, he lived, gave a chronic interest to the crossing of the handrail bridge: whether he would be out on his feeding-ground and give us a glimpse of his noble proportions as he sailed into his rock-roofed lair. Nor does it need to be an angler to feel a thrill at the near sight of a big spotted trout gliding through clear water—every one responds to it. Here too, looking up or down the leafy avenues where the boulder-fretted waters are glittering in sun and shadow, an ousel may be showing its white breast against some mossy rock, or a pair of sandpipers will scud over the bridge, their young ones tucked away under some grassy bank waiting to fly and to wing their way later to sandy seashores.

Whither and where will their autumnal wanderings lead them—who shall say? To the golden bars that at low tide rib the Mawddach estuary, or to the firm yellow sands that rim the Morfa Harlech—only an hour's flight? probably neither! Quite as likely this little family by Christmas-time will be scattered over all the coasts of Britain, perhaps far beyond Britain, scudding through the sea wrack on some flat East Anglian shore, or following out the galloping tides at the Solway mouth. They have wonderful taste in streams, these water ousels and sandpipers,[1] and indeed, one might almost say, in scenery. When setting up house in April, they have no use at all for the sluggish waters. They despise even the chalk streams. Not a nest of either will be found east of the Welsh Marches, or of Devonshire and its borders, or south of Derbyshire.

So over the stream and up through the narrow wood beyond, thence by a steep field-path along the edge of a deep dingle, full of oak and beech and sycamore and mountain ash out of whose boughs, being Sunday, wood-pigeons break away at quite easy shots. For nowadays every one's hand is against the cushat. His immoral character was always realized, but we all have a soft spot for him as he fills the June woods with his mellifluous notes, and makes a welcome "etcetera" to the bag in autumn. But he has proved himself too prolific. You can have too much of a good thing, and there are too many wood-pigeons for the good of the crops. Heaven forbid that this essential figure in English rural life and scenery should be eliminated! But there is no fear of that, he is much too wary, though every county in England, Wales, and Scotland have their "wood-pigeon day" and turn out armed to the teeth. We cross the lane which serves the higher farms, along which there will be much foot traffic to-day to chapels, church, and Sunday schools. For the world as yet has hardly touched this sequestered Arcady. Save for its dead commemorated in the village street, the war might almost be a dream. Moreover, the whole valley is sealed up in the Welsh tongue. Yet Oswestry, its market town, is almost as English as Shrewsbury.

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[1] The ousel, dipper, or water-colley is of course a native, the sandpiper a migrant.

Following a trail across boggy, snipey intervals between farming land and dry moorland, a half-hour's easy walk brings us to the summit of Y Garn, and a height, as already mentioned, of about 2000 feet. Now the east side of the Rhaiadr and of its valley is in that straggling collection of old Marcher-Lordships which Henry VIII welded into the disjointed county of Denbigh, a shire that should never have leaped the Berwyn! On this side we are in the more compact county of Montgomery, also formed out of Lordships, and turning our backs on the familiar and loftier mountains that shut out the north, we can look southward over the whole of that noble region, the Powys Ucha, the Powys Gwenwynwyn, in broad terms of olden days, and a good deal more besides. This, to the very farthest limit of vision, as already stated, is the country of the Severn and the Vyrnwy. No great mountain chain breaks across its horizon as would confront us if we climbed the Berwyn here and looked northward. But a vast expanse of broken landscape spreads hence, far and wide, a country of hills of every shape and size, ruddy patches of tillage, with white homesteads, catching the sun on their slopes; others, again, crowned or draped with the oak woods for which this old Marcher land is famous. Long ridges of bare moorland in this quarter or in that, rising above these signs of occupation, mark the winding valleys of those limpid streams that so copiously water and infinitely beautify this fair land of Powys.[1]

Its landmarks are outstanding enough. The Breidden to the south-east stand in fine and stark isolation, the gateway where the Severn enters England: the most distinguished heights for their modest altitude of 1200 feet, save the Malverns, in England or Wales, and a worthy monument of the last stand made by the West Britons against the Roman power. With a glass we can see the pillar on their summit to that naval hero, Lord Rodney, erected by his admirers in Shropshire and Montgomery, as some unkindly hint, not so much for his victories as for the stimulus he gave to the price of local oak, which easily topped the market. We could even make out on these marvellous clear evenings the faint outlines of the south Shropshire heights. But much nearer and more interesting, from east to west, ran our southern horizon. From the "Long Mountain" over against the Breidden, where Henry VII picked up by appointment his Welsh supporters for Bosworth Field, the long waving line of heights on the Severn's farther bound pushes westward across Montgomeryshire, till we lose them in the confusion of misty hills where that greatest of English rivers finds its mountain birth. For five dim and rounded heads extended in a line just show themselves above the verge of sight.

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[1] Powis is the rather capriciously modernized form of Powys.

It was not so much the gratification of a distant sight of Plynlimmon from here, as I took that for granted. But well as I know that rather undistinguished but historic mountain, that apotheosis of lonely wastes, of russet solitudes, both at close quarters and from various angles, I never could understand how and whence it acquired its name of Pumplummon (anglicized to Plynlimmon)—otherwise the "five tops". From here, however, its justification hits you in the eye at once, though when on the spot the twin summits of Arwystli and Ceredigion and an inconspicuous lesser one seem the limit of the mountain's proper bounds. How the other pair come so conspicuously into the picture at this angle I do not know. But most assuredly it was the folks living at a distance and in this direction who gave Plynlimmon its name, not those of its own neighbourhood. Powysland, upper and lower, Ucha and Isaf, drove through Central Wales like a wedge, its broad base resting on the English border, thereby rendering its princes most vulnerable to the English power and susceptible to the King of England's threats or blandishments, and not unnaturally inclined to wobbling in inter-racial troubles. Its narrow point rested upon Cardigan Bay about the mouth of the river Dovey.

If these old days of mediæval Wales and the half-seen figures that flit so stormily across their stage have moved one sufficiently to cultivate some acquaintance with them, a good deal beyond a doubt is added to one's enjoyment of a land of such romantic appeal to the eye. To see nothing but the surface of a country, however æsthetically inspiring, seems to me quite inadequate for a full appreciation and complete enjoyment of it. But for this a sense of the past is indispensable, and that is more often, I fancy, born in a man or woman than acquired. For without it you cannot really "feel" a country, a phrase which I trust sufficiently explains itself, as it does not permit of analysis. Wales responds to this form of sympathy with interest and is singularly eloquent of the past. Her mountains and her rivers, her ruined castles, her very place-names seem to harbour such abounding memories. There is at any rate no doubt whatever of its power through all time of holding the affection of its own sons and furthermore stimulating them to song. In the centuries when England was virtually dumb, a whole galaxy of Welsh poets were writing immortal verse. It was not the trained bards only, men of peace who sang of their patrons' warlike feats, of their own lady loves, of birds and flowers and nature; but some of the Princes themselves, the men of war and of the sword like the great Elizabethans three and four centuries later, wrote not merely warlike epics but sang too of gentler themes. As one looks over all this teeming land of Powys, Owain Cyfeiliog, who was its lord and prince in the days of Henry II, rises inevitably at once to the mind as one of these warrior poets. The "Hirlas Horn" (the long blue horn) is famous wherever Welsh is spoken, and is, I believe, one of the longest poems of the twelfth century.

"This horn we dedicate to joy
Then fill the Hirlas horn, my boy,
    That shineth like the sea.
Whose azure handles tipped with gold
Invite the grasp of Britons bold,
    The sons of liberty."

Owain pictures himself seated in his banqueting hall surrounded by his followers the night after a battle. After eulogizing the deeds of each doughty warrior, he sends him the brimming horn, " the long blue baffalo horn of high privilege set with old silver ", to set the seal on his gratitude. And then he finds after celebrating the prowess of this or that one that the horn has made its journey in vain and that their accustomed seats are empty, and the song turns to mourning their loss :

"Ha! the cry of death . . .
O lost Moreiddig—how greatly shall I need thee."

Giraldus knew Owain personally: " A man of more fluent speech than his contemporary princes and conspicuous for his good government of his territory ". He was fond of a joke, too, and when dining with Henry II, who was very partial to him, at Shrewsbury, perpetrated rather an audacious one. The King as a mark of favour sent one of his own loaves to Owain, who broke it up into small pieces like alms bread, and, placing them at a distance from him, reached out and put them one by one into his mouth. On the King requiring an explanation, he said : " I thus follow the example of my lord," alluding to his avaricious disposition in retaining ecclesiastical benefices in his own hands.

Another example of the singular versatility of these old Welsh chieftains was Howel, son of the great Owain Gwynnedd, Prince of North Wales and for the moment virtual ruler of most of Wales. For this young man fought hard in the interests of his potent sire. Yet, in his brief interludes of domestic peace when not laying about him, he composed quite charming verses, full of the sentiment of love and the beauties of nature. Of Wales, " her fair landscapes, her bright waters and verdant vales, her beauteous women, her fields clothed with tender trefoil, her noble mountain wilds ". From those of Ardudwy :

"Fast by the margin of the deep
Where storms eternal uproar keep,"

to the heath-clad heights above Llangollen ; or again :

"Give me the fair, the gentle maid
Of slender form in mantle green
Whose woman's art is ever staid
Subdued by virtue's graceful mien.

Give me the maid whose heart with mine
Shall blend each thought, each hope combine.

. . . .

I choose thee, maiden, for thy gifts divine,
'Tis right to choose—then, fairest, choose me thine."

It is not easy to imagine John of Gaunt or Grey of Ruthin sitting down to pen such lines. But Howel when he chose could also write of his own more particular pastimes and describe the horrors of the war he did not hesitate to provoke:

"The ravens croaked and human blood
In ruddy streams poured o'er the land.
There burning houses war proclaimed;
Churches in flames and palace halls;
While sheets of fire scale the sky
And warriors on to battle cry."

Giraldus, that sagacious and impartial critic of the mediæval Welsh he knew so well, praises their skill in vocal music which they sang in parts and not as elsewhere in unison, their oratorical and forensic gifts, their genealogists, their story-tellers. "They are a race," says he, "of subtle and penetrating intellect. Whatever the subject of study to which they may apply themselves, their rich natural endowment of mind enables them to excel in it." He then proceeds as usual to remind them of their shortcomings, and does so with no sparing hand.

CHAPTER IX

AMONG THE BERWYNS

MUCH might be said, from the motorist's point of view, that is to say, of the three-quarters of a mile of private road, or rather lane, which climbs by devious ways from the valley road up the mountain to Pen-y-Craig. The angles are sharp, the pitches steep, and the roadway for some distance is only just wide enough to admit a full-sized car. The owner with a large one thinks nothing of it—Myfanwy would have thought nothing of it! Strangers quail before it, and I myself would not care to face it in the hands, let us say, of a Sussex pilot. But as a rule they are not expected to. They halt at the bottom and are fetched up. The old and rather testy chauffeur of a friend of ours from the Severn valley, who came over to lunch one day, brooded and muttered by the way, so his master said, on the indignity in prospect. He would like to see the hill in Wales he couldn't drive up, etc. etc. When it came to ascending this one, however, in D——'s car as a passenger, he recanted straight away, and it was the first time in his forty years' service with the family, so they declared, he had ever been known to admit himself in the wrong. Some nearer neighbours came on another occasion in a hired car whose driver, anything, I believe, but an expert, essayed to bring them up. But they arrived at the house on foot, and in a state of pardonable agitation, having jumped for their lives, the driver included, as the baffled car was running backwards downhill between two stone walls. Luckily it capsized before touching either, and they had left it bottom upwards in the road with its owner sitting on the fence in a sad and contemplative mood.

These evening walks about the nearer heights, with their deep draughts of mountain air, and their abiding visions of the hills and vales of old Powysland, were but memorable interludes in those June days. For the weather was almost kind—at the worst it was cold. The horrors of the past spring were fresh in all our minds. Hopes for the coming summer, to be so dismally frustrated, were buoyant within us. It proved to be the only week or so of continuous fine weather in my Welsh summer, or in any one's summer for that matter. And there was much to be seen and done outside the home beat in those long days after the fearsome hail and snowstorms of May. Men were then doubting whether the grouse, and even the partridges, had not been actually driven from their snow-covered nests and frozen eggs. But that was all in the lap of the gods. The gods, however, proved kind.

A favourite outing from Pen-y-Craig with a luncheon basket, or rather with the ingredients of one distributed, was Llyn-y-Caws, generally alluded to as "the Tarn".[1] For the little llyn lay in a high cup, after the manner of its kind, immediately beneath the rocky front of Cader Berwyn, which with its neighbour, Moel Sych, bulked so largely at the head of our valley from the windows of the house. There were some nice trout in the little lake for those whose fancy lay that way, while the top of the mountain above was the highest point of the whole Berwyn range, and from here a comparatively short climb, when the fish sulked or for those who held the angler's craft in light esteem. I had been up here once the summer before. It had been quite a hot, still day down below. The fishermen had doubts whether there would be sufficient ripple on the water. But it blew an icy blast on the Tarn, and half a gale on the mountain top. Nor is there so much as a peat hag as a refuge for the battered.

On this occasion, as always, the car was left under the big trees near the house at the foot of the waterfall, that very same house whose mistress, in 1854, as I have said, entertained Borrow [with the tale of a madman she had recently seen cross the natural arch through which the cataract falls,] and had induced her husband to guide him over the moors towards Bala. The reckless acrobat, she declared, must have been a Russian! The echoes of the Crimean War took queer shape up in these wilds! She provided the distinguished wayfarer on that occasion, as I have also related, with a bowl of buttermilk, which he lapped up eagerly and with relish. One is lost in admiration of the prophet's adaptability when the good ale, the cwrw dda, is not forthcoming. I fancy the successors of these good folks who now cater for visitors to the waterfall, though in simple enough fashion, would not find buttermilk in such demand! A bare green valley comes down at right angles to the Pistyll, delivering its little dancing stream, which comes out of the tarn, into the river just below. Looking up it, you can see the steep face and crown of Cader Berwyn at its head, two or three miles away, towering above the boggy shelf in which the lake lies hidden. It is a particularly charming walk up this wild but verdant vale, or rather glen, and what is more, it is delightful walking. For a smooth road overlaid with springy turf as smooth as a lawn but broad enough for a cart, runs high up at a gentle grade along the folding hillsides. Whether it be the remains of an old drovers' road over the mountains from the Dee, a British trackway, or was contrived in later days by the Rhaiadr folks for hauling out their peat, I know not.

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[1] *Tarn*, meaning, I believe, "a tear," is, of course, not a Welsh word, though widely used among English-speaking Welsh. There is, I think, no diminutive for *Llyn*. *Pwll* hardly meets the case. *Tarn* is Cumbrian, and, I take it, of Scandinavian derivation.

Anyway the high hill upon either hand, the two walls of the valley, looked radiant in the morning sunshine which lit them both; velvety slopes of sheep pasture, sprinkled with patches of grey rock, or draped here and there with wide sprawling beds of bracken, in the first fresh green of their summer fronds, and alive with twittering stonechats, linnets, chiff-chaffs, and tit-larks. Even the foxgloves which so abound in the woods and hedgerows of the Rhaiadr valley, as in all Welsh valleys, struggle for a short way up the banks of the brook and flourish among the bunches of heath and gorse, bog myrtle, and rushes that fringe it. Looking down from our smoothly ascending trail, a very luxury of mountain travel, the brook of the lake gleams and flashes in its green and open trough far below. The mountain sheep and their lambs are all about, the latter clamorous and agile in their first joy of life. Coming up here alone in the previous summer, I had witnessed a curious and rather comical scene. For about fifty yards down the hill below me was a ewe with two lambs behind her silently confronting a fox, only a few feet dividing them. Both animals stood perfectly motionless and staring each other steadily in the face, as if fascinated from their very different points of view. I don't know how long they would have kept up this joke, but when, after watching them for some time, I moved on, Brer Fox suddenly realized that he had not got the mountain to himself, and cantered away up the valley to his friends and relations who haunt the mountains in greater numbers than the farmers care for.

Our pleasant path came to an end a mile from the Tarn, when the sides of the valley drew together, and the stream in a series of small cascades comes leaping out of the high bogland. Up and over this lay our now soft and trackless way, a rather tiresome toil, above all as on this occasion, like the last one, the serenity of the green vale below suddenly vanished and we found ourselves entering a very cave of the winds. These Welsh mountain-tops and the tarns within them I do really think have their own meteorology and weather system. They make me sometimes feel that the old classical treatment of tempests—those "Caves of Æolus" and "Temples of the Winds"—was not after all so fanciful: that the notion of winds raging perennially in their allotted chambers and let out betimes for the confounding of mortals by land and sea was not altogether so far-fetched.

The keeper, who is a perfect mine of lore and wisdom in all that concerns these hills and vales, had assured our anglers that there would be a nice ripple on the Tarn. A ripple! My goodness! When we reached the shores of the little lake we could hardly stand up, and small white-horses were hissing on the out-jutting rocks and flop-flopping against the black peaty banks. The Tarn is as nearly round as unassisted nature could fashion one. Hence no doubt its name, which being interpreted means a cheese. It is curiously shallow all round with a glistening gravelly bottom till towards the centre where, according to local tradition, it has no bottom at all! It must be nearly 2000 feet above sea-level, as the rocky front of Cader Berwyn at its upper end can hardly measure another 1000 feet. Elsewhere, ridges of high mountain sweep down to its shores and encompass the lake about. At any rate it has a climate of its own—most tarns have! In the world below a gentle south-west breeze was hardly stirring the leaves of the woodland into which the Pistyll plunges. Up here it had managed to transpose itself into a cold gale from the north-east which blew the anglers' flies clean out of the water, and banished all thoughts of climbing to the top of the Berwyn. Even the ladies, generally the most persevering at such adventures, gave it up. But every one present had stood on that midway pinnacle of Wales before, some, many times. I myself had come over it from Llandrillo on the other side, as I mentioned earlier, on a dull, still April day, more years ago than I care to reckon.

I have called these linked summits of Cader Berwyn and Moel Sych the very pinnacle of Wales. For, in truth, they command everything northward to the sea and to Snowdonia, as can readily be imagined from what I have said about their lower satellites about Corwen and Llangollen. While southward their great height enables one to look right over Powys-land, over the great solitudes of central Wales, to the dim lines of the Black Mountains and the Brecon Beacons, the Bannau Brecheiniog far to the south, which in truth are a trifle higher than these topmost Berwyns. Lunch by the tarn, with the sun on its sleeping surface and the winds at rest and the curlews calling, is a ritual worth a much greater effort than it demands in the getting there. On this day, however, it was a mere necessary ordeal to be got through and endured in silence when and where each one could secure a patch of rushes to crouch under! The ladies showed their discretion by slipping off and betaking themselves back again to the waterfall and enjoying theirs in a comparatively tropical climate, beneath the glorious thunder of the cataract. D—— and the keeper, to be sure, had gone up the mountain, but on a business affair, not to see the view. For Jones had turned up with his gun, as he had a standing quarrel with the foxes that haunted the high screes and rocks, and the cubs were now on foot. Jones organizes great assaults on them from time to time on these mountain-tops, in which neighbouring keepers and farmers take a hand. Having encircled the height selected for attack, this scratch team advances in loose skirmishing order, when the foxes, or some of them, sooner or later have to break through the line of guns. The bag on occasions has been known to approach double figures.

The gentleman from Melton Mowbray needn't "take a fit", as the Americans say, at this tale of cold-blooded vulpicide. There are as many foxes down in Powys-land as so noted a pheasant-shooting country elects to spare for such hunting as goes on there. Anyway, these mountain foxes would be no use to the low-country horsemen, and they have to be killed somehow. Though a native of the valley, Jones speaks English almost fluently after the manner of most Welsh keepers, though with an occasional Welsh idiom in English which gives a racy flavour to his always instructive and entertaining converse. He and his friends seem to enjoy these aerial fox-hunts mightily, and, thanks to the farmers who are rather amateurish with their guns and sometimes too paralysed to fire them off when a fox runs almost through their legs, they provide not a few humourous incidents for leisure-hour reminiscence. It is a pity there are no foot packs of foxhounds in this country, such as the four or five that for so long have hunted the English lakeland, keeping down the foxes and at the same time giving such pleasure to the keen dalesmen who are their chief supporters. This business, however, implies throwing off hounds at or before sunrise, which towards the end of the season means about five o'clock—six hours before the Pytchley and the Quorn are beginning to draw their first covert.

There used to be a private pack of this kind kept, and it may possibly be still kept, by the Jones' of Ynysfor in the Snowdon mountains. I remember, just before the war, rising in the small hours to meet them near Harlech. There was also a farmers' subscription pack of the same type kennelled at Rhayader for hunting the Radnor and Brecon mountains in the winter, and boarded out with farmers, as they are in Lakeland, through the summer. It is due, no doubt, to keeper Jones' indefatigable activities against all enemies of grouse, partridges, and pheasants, that there are no longer any ravens nor yet peregrine falcons in the crags above the tarn. As a lesser cause of annoyance, a pair of cormorants found their long way up here from the sea a couple of years ago, and spent a month or two fishing the water, which, being mostly shallow and the trout of fair size, possibly accounts for their most suspicious decline in numbers. Of that harmless little hawk, the kestrel, however, there are any number on the lower mountains. On the hill above Pen-y-Craig I once watched no less than eight all busy above the gorse breaks and the ferns at the same time.

Of human fish-poaching within keeper Jones' range there is almost none, and that is saying a good deal. For the Welsh of certain districts are the worst offenders in the more nefarious methods of this business in all Britain. Certain villages and districts have, and always have had, an evil name. This vale of the Rhaiadr is in any case rather idyllic. But even the Dee valley has no such sinister reputation as Carnarvonshire and Western Merioneth, where the quarrymen particularly are incorrigible and poach in battalions which nothing but a regiment of soldiers could resist. The game preserver has no more trouble than elsewhere—possibly rather less, but it is not so with fish. The English proletariat have at least accepted the fact that salmon and trout are the property of the owners of the waters that support them, just as partridges and pheasants belong to the owners of the fields and woods they range in, whatever liberties the lawless may take with them. But the Welsh peasant in his heart has never recognized anything of the kind. All this is, of course, quite illogical. But I am strongly of opinion that the reason must be sought in the far past, and the different conditions of the Welsh game laws in remote times. The Normans, of course, burnt the iron of game preservation into the very souls of the English peasantry. The Welsh had little or no such disciplining in olden times, and I think it is more than likely that this extraordinary reluctance to respect the fishery laws is partly due to unconscious heredity. The more democratic part of the Welsh bench, too, act as if they also inherited it by the light sentences they impose when they have the chance. By poaching I don't mean merely intruding on preserved waters with a rod. That is comparatively a trifle. But invasion in force with nets, and worse still, with lime and dynamite.

Jones has a thrilling story of an old poacher of the former and more reputable kind, who used to live in Llanrhaiadr and fish for the market. He was in the habit of raiding both the club and private waters of the Tanat by night, and selling the fish openly the next day, there being of course no proof or evidence whence he took them. Every device of Jones and his neighbours concerned with the water to catch him failed. The wily old sportsman baffled the very best laid plans every time. In telling the story of this departed hero, the narrator doesn't conceal his admiration, that of a gallant man for a brave antagonist, particularly as the latter is long out of the way and under the sod. He recalls all the ambushes and traps they laid, and how on every occasion the old poacher vanished, like Owen Glyndwr, at the crucial moment when they thought they had him for certain in their grip. But Jones tells the thrilling story not merely eloquently, but like a true artist. He doesn't merely repeat at the end of each attempt that the quarry escaped, but terminates each adventure with the significant and effective climax : " But he was selling trout in Llanrhaiadr the next morning whatefer ". Finally they encompassed him one night at the spot where he was positively known to be casting his illicit line. They were quite a large company collected for a crowning effort, and forming a wide circle they drew stealthily in on the unconscious poacher who had just been located on unimpeachable evidence. His capture or identification *in flagrante delicto* seemed a dead certainty. There was no escape. The circle narrowed till they all closed in on both sides of the pool. But on running in, there was nothing, absolutely nothing, nor sight nor sound of anything but the rippling stream and the night wind in the alders, though the narrator didn't put it that way. He paused rather before a mystery too great for any words to recount, and then ended the story with artistic finality: " But he was selling trout next morning in Llanrhaiadr whatefer". They gave him up after that as a magician, as a wizard.

Welsh is beyond a doubt one of the hardest of languages to acquire. But strange as the statement may seem, its pronunciation, which to outsiders seems so absolutely cryptic, is in truth comparatively simple, so far, that is to say, as the essential sounds are concerned. A few hours of application would provide anyone of ordinary intelligence with the equipment necessary to pronounce almost all place-names correctly at sight, not, of course, with the inflection and intonation of a native, but with as much accuracy as a native could and would expect from a foreigner. At any rate the latter would avoid those phonetic blunders that sound ridiculous, but which some excellent people with dull ears, small faculty for observation, or much sense of humour, persist in all their lives, though frequent travellers in the country.

The Welsh " w ", for instance, would seem at first sight an unsurmountable and paralysing obstacle in the written word. When the simple fact that it is merely a double " o ", as in *poor*, mystic words like *drws* and *bwlch* become as simple as cat and dog. The oft discussed " ll ", again, is generally sounded in Welsh as something of a guttural " ch ", sometimes lightly, sometimes forcibly. But if a Saxon finds it easier to make " tl " of it, aspirating it slightly through the teeth, that is quite enough for every ordinary purpose and would place him entirely beyond all cavil. But to render Llangollen as Langolen, or Llanfyllyn (*Ll*anvu*ll*yn) as Lanfilin, sounds in Wales so ridiculous as to border almost on the offensive. The vowels again have all different sounds or values from their English written equivalents. The " a ", as the first " a " in Bala, for instance, or in las (blue) which comes in so many place-names, is a blend between the broad and the flat, inclining slightly to the former but a distinctly Welsh sound, a subtlety, however, which matters nothing for elementary purposes. " Barla ", as an Englishman says " parlour ", would be all wrong, Balla would be better but too flat—I think that about expresses it. The vowel " y ", again, is a little troublesome, being generally sounded as " u " in all but the last syllable, as in Mynydd for instance, a mountain, rendered Munnith, while *Bryn*, as in English, is *Brin*. " E " is more or less as the French " e ", while " i " is the English " e ", and " u " the English " i " as in *Pump* (five), pronounced *Pimp*; " o " is the English " o ". These are but a few leading examples. But what makes Welsh words in one sense easy to pronounce is that every letter is sounded. Even with a word like *fawr* or *mawr* (big), so common in Welsh topography, it is quite enough for a foreigner to pronounce it *mower* (the " ow " as in " now "), and not blunder into " *more* ". You might think to hear him that the Welshman too said " mower ", but in reality he is saying " *ma-oor* ", and of course he always sounds the terminal r's. It is easy to remember that " f " is always " v ", and that " ff " is " f ", that " dd " is " th " as in with, while the Welsh " th " is equivalent to ours in *faith*.

The Welsh intonation, sing-song, or lilt which characterizes more or less the English of all Welshmen not entirely anglicized, whether English monoglots from Radnor and Glamorgan or bilingual natives of the other counties, is merely the correct inflections and intonations of the Welsh tongue transferred automatically and unconsciously to English. There is one rule of Welsh pronunciation, by the way, that should always be remembered, and moreover is quite simple. Namely that the accent in place-names is nearly always, except in some compound words, thrown on the penultimate, which makes all for resonancy. The English tongue is apt to accentuate the first, in words of three or even four syllables, leaving us to scuffle over the rest as best we may, which is not melodious.

Imperfect Welsh-English has not often much humour on the printed page like the Scottish Doric, though I would not for my life suggest that racy tongue to be anything but classic Northern English. But it has a good deal sometimes in the utterance. Here, for instance, are three visitors from Merionethshire, airing their English in rather an amusing way as overheard last year at a Wembley buffet-counter. Bent on doing themselves well, they ordered three glasses of vintage port.

No. 1 having emptied his and smacked his lips, set it down with the remark: "Look you, that is the finest glass of wine I neffer tasted".

Said No. 2, following suit: "So did I also".

And No. 3 not to be outshone as a linguist, crowned the performance as he drained his glass: "Neither did I too".

We seized the opportunity of another genial day to cross the Berwyns by the only passable road that bestrides the range in the whole of its course, between Chirk and the Arans. This road starts serious business at the ancient village of Llangynog, that six miles higher up the Tanat valley from Llanrhaiadr squats at the southern foot of the Berwyns. We were a cheerful party of five in D——'s car under his more than capable pilotage. The village is of a fair size, owing to the neighbourhood of three or four lead mines and slate quarries. One of the former is said to have brought an annual income of £20,000 to the house of Powis for forty years in the eighteenth century. Llangynog is named like innumerable Welsh villages from a fifth-century saint, in this case St. Cynog. The remains of an old British village, however, on the hill above will long antedate the days of that pious martyr, for such he appears to have been. There is, in truth, something of irony in the fact that the rural dissenters of Wales, who have so little use for saints and a regrettable passion for emblazoning their own temples of worship with Jewish place-names, should so often have to live their lives in daily invocation of some name on the British calendar: though I am not sure what proportion of these ancient British missioners figures on that famous roll. The name of St. Cynog, however, with those of two or three hundred others, imbedded in that of the villages they either founded or gave their names to, is as immutable a fixture as the everlasting hills themselves.

A road comes in just short of Llangynog from Lake Vyrnwy, away up in the mountains to the westward, that noble five-mile stretch of water which Liverpool created over the site of the uprooted hamlet of Llanwddyn. It must be said on their behalf that they introduced a most beautiful feature into the lap of these wild mountains, for Lake Vyrnwy is entirely beautiful. I well remember driving this way home from it when in the making. It was a drizzly autumn evening, but Llangynog was in tremendous spirits. It was celebrating the eve of a cattle fair and was astonishingly merry and in a generally convivial condition. At any rate the congested inn, where we stopped to bait our horses and refresh ourselves, was very much so. But this was in the bad old days a long, long time ago! We afterwards crossed the mountains in the dark—without any sort of misgiving, but then we couldn't see anything (I don't mean on account of Llangynog). And I only realized the other day after half a lifetime, that it was just as well perhaps for our mental comfort that we couldn't: and yet more, for our bodily safety, that our driver had come out of the Llangynog ordeal unscathed—for it was pitch dark and raining.

From Llangynog, which is only some 500 feet above sea-level and a sort of terminus of the lower country life and travel, our road shifts into the second class as it heads for the mountains. For two or three miles, however, it runs along the eastern edge of the pastoral amenities, the sparsely strung out homesteads and green enclosures of the Eiarth valley, while brushing our right shoulders were the wild moors, pressing up from the back of the Pistyll-Rhaiadr. We could see over beyond the Eiarth valley yet another cataract, the head-waters of the Tanat, falling in a thin white trail over a reddish cliff among the bare hills. Catching the sun from the south, it struck a fine note in the green and russet wilderness.

We were soon at the 1000-foot level, where a gate marks the end of the hedgerows and the beginning of the wild. An ancient peasant, supported by his equally venerable partner, who sat knitting under the last tree for many a long mile, had obviously pre-empted the office of gate-opener. Hardly a gold-mine, I should imagine, for I was over here twice in one week, lingering for an hour or so by the way, and encountered in all just one little side-car! August may be more profitable. In a short time the narrowish, unfenced road edged around the brink of ravines, cut by torrents descending from the hills above, which awkward turns again gave me to think not of the present, but of that black night thirty odd years ago, of our lumbering outfit and its cheerful, unconscious burden. But in the sunlight of to-day we were soon round these tricky corners and on the long gentle undulations by which this really delightful road travels for miles across the wide, heathery plateau of the Berwyn range. At 1600 feet, by a little its highest point, we crossed the rubicon between Merioneth and Montgomery, incidentally marked by a group of craggy knolls by the roadside known as Milltir Gerrig. As the hour also fitted the need, this likely spot, with its offer of pleasant shelter from the keen mountain breeze, cried lunch in the loudest of accents. Nor to-day, as yesterday by the Tarn, was our hunger to be appeased, crouching each one for himself, as best he could in a howling blast, behind a bunch of rushes. But it was a quite sumptuous feast that was laid out in the little cuppy and sheltered hollow of green turf, with our backs against the leeward side of the crags and our faces looking out over a wide world on the other—and what a world too !

For it was high June, and what more could be desired ? In truth there was just one thing more to be wished for, since the heather was of course not yet in bloom. Only the ling was beginning to splash the crisp strips of green sward by the roadside with patches of crimson, to the out-shining of the modest white bedstraw, and the yellow trefoil of which the old Welsh poets sing so abundantly. It may be noted, too, that the southern slopes of the Berwyns are all along rather deficient in heather, and carry in consequence a comparatively small stock of grouse. But the heart of them, as up here and again their northern slopes for the most part, are well clad with it, and contain the finest moors in Wales. For twenty miles long waves and ridges of yet brown heath lay everywhere in great patches over the June verdure of the moorland sheep pastures, and spread over hill and dale eastward till terminated by the hazy forms of the Llangollen heights. Assuredly, in these high latitudes, one would exchange even June for August with its crimson mantle. Neighbouring ridges of moorland to the westward shut out from view the wild uplands where the Tanat and the Vyrnwy have their source, and many grouse moors, by name familiar to generations of "Field" readers, spread far and wide their miles of heather which would be radiant before the guns came up. Their near neighbourhood provoked a veteran of our little party to personal memories of them in the earlier days of grouse driving.

As we sat smoking after lunch, a stalwart, well-to-do-looking young sheep farmer, with a couple of collies, appeared out of the wilderness. Having English, he was sociably inclined, and proved quite illuminating on the landmarks of estates and moors, in which the well-known names of Palé and Rhiwlas and "Syr Watkin" figured of course prominently, and these things are always interesting to countrymen, though dull enough perhaps to a touring townsman.

Away over the hills to the west, too, is the only other road of any kind that crosses the Berwyn. This starts from Bala and climbs the Aber-Hirnant valley, and thence on over the high moors and down the Vyrnwy to the lake, after which communication with the low country is easy. My memories of it coincided with the current opinion of to-day, that it was to be avoided. But I have said nothing of the scene that here opened out ahead of us to the north. The Dee in its deep vale of Edeyrnion, cut right across our middle distance, just over the far edge of our moorland plateau, and could be readily traced by its enclosing heights to the distant Gamelyn mountains and Eglwyseg cliffs of Llangollen. Bala Lake, like the Dee, lay deep down ahead of us, but as yet hidden from view. Arenig-Fawr stood boldly up in the background, and the whole wild confusion of hills and mountains beyond the sacred river, associated with our tempestuous drive of a former chapter, was clear enough. But Snowdonia—the mountains of Eryri, as the Welsh have always called them—showed dark, sombre, and misty to-day, hardly outlined with sufficient clearness to distinguish Hebog from the Wyddfa itself, or the Glydyrs from Tryfan.

But, at any rate, there was sunshine all over the hills and vales of Merioneth. We were more fortunate than Borrow, for it was just here, at our very luncheon place, that he was brought on to the road, across the hills from Pistyll-Rhaiadr, by the man of the waterfall, and in twilight, darkness, and rain pursued his lonely way to Bala. The drop from the high moors down to the Dee valley is sharp and short, nearly 1000 feet in perhaps a couple of miles, but by an admirable road, for the most part embowered in fine woods, giving charming glimpses of the Dee urging its rapid way below through the pleasant grounds of Bodwenni, and at one or two points a glimpse of Bala Lake. As in due course we skirted the shore of the lake's lower end towards the little town, crossing the outflow of the Dee, the breeze was blowing quite stiffly along its broad bosom and raising long lines of white horses from shore to shore. And as always from this quarter the Arans stood up boldly beyond its western end, giving it that distinction which makes the criticism of "uninteresting" that one occasionally sees passed upon it seem entirely foolish.

The lake in common parlance takes its name from the little town on its banks. But its proper designation is Llyn Tegid, with an archaic alternative of Pemblemere, corrupted from Pump-y-mer, the lake of the five parishes. There are more Joneses in Bala for its population than in any place in Wales, and that is saying a good deal! It was a time-honoured Oxford joke that if you went into the "quad" of Jesus and shouted out Jones loud enough, every other window would respond to the appeal. If in a sufficiently frivolous frame of mind, you could, no doubt, collect by the same method a nice little crowd in no time, at any point in the streets of Bala.

Neither, however, of Bala's most distinguished sons of recent times bore the popular patronymic, though both were extraordinarily popular men with all who knew them—by no means a necessary corollary to distinction. A statue has been erected in Bala to Mr. Tom Ellis, son of a farming family in the neighbourhood, who from Oxford (if memory serves me) followed politics, was a prominent Welsh Member of Parliament, and died prematurely as a very popular Liberal Whip in the House of Commons. The village of Llanywchllyn, at the head of the lake, was the birthplace and throughout life the holiday home of Owen Edwards, of quite humble parentage and incidentally a much valued Fellow and Historical Lecturer of Lincoln College, Oxford, but notable in Wales as a leading authority on Welsh literature, with a particularly charming mind and personality. He was rushed into Parliament by an enthusiastic constituency of quarrymen at Festiniog in Gladstone's later days. I don't think he liked it at all, and he certainly didn't like writing letters, an indispensable obligation, I take it, to the modern politician, though he could write delightful prose on more attractive themes. At any rate, he was soon raised to a more congenial sphere as head of the first Welsh Board of Education, and he too died in harness rather prematurely.

It is rather a jump from these modern worthies to Llawarch Hên, whose dust is said to lie at Llanfar, a mile on our road home below Bala. If so, it seems quite out of place and, furthermore, must have been lying there for about thirteen centuries. It should by right be mingling with Salopian mould, though, as he lived till he was one hundred and fifty, he had lots of time to forget all about Uriconium, the white city which was burnt by the barbarian Saxons before his eyes, with his sons and all that was dear to him, and time enough left to wander all over the country. With Merlin and Taliesin he belonged to a notable and more or less contemporary trio. His sons all predeceased him, and no wonder!

"Four-and-twenty sons were mine,
Wont in battle front to shine.
But now in dust they all are laid,
Not one remains their sire to aid."

However, as his poems remain, the very oldest we have, the place of his dust is of slight consequence.

Our return journey was to be down the Dee valley, through Corwen and Llangollen, and back home by Chirk and Oswestry —a line already traversed in these pages. Our party were anxious to take their hats off to the great Glyndwr on the site of his vanished manor-house at Glyndyfrdwy. As tea was to be a further and minor picnic, I had the hardihood or inspiration to suggest that we should have it on the summit of the sacred mound itself, a liberty which, on arriving there, we proceeded to take, as it is not forty yards from the road. And a pleasanter perch for that innocent ritual could hardly be found than its ample grassy top, with the old fir trees sighing overhead and the Dee murmuring below in its wide rocky bed at our feet. I am inclined to think this was the first attempt of the kind: and I would not recommend it as a precedent, or the farmer may put a black bull in the field, as his predecessor did many years ago. I have reason to remember this. For a friend, with whom I was staying at the time in the village inn, took his wife with a camera into the field to photograph the mound, without a suspicion of any malign presence. Luckily their job didn't take them more than a few yards from the locked gate. But in the middle of it, a black bull appeared above the bank of the river at unpleasantly close quarters, and began at once to manifest the utmost annoyance at the camera and tripod. My friend who was a strong active man and used to cattle, didn't lose a second. He hustled his wife to the gate and over it, and as he was following her with the camera, the bull charged. He just landed on the ground as the brute's horns hit the gate.

I have already noted that Prince Henry himself describes how he burned this house of Owen's. Probably the Welsh hero used it when attending to his affairs over here, or hunting and hawking in this the chief part of his property. Old "Iolo", his faithful bard and intimate friend, one may fancy remaining on these occasions amid the luxuries of Sycharth, while his Chief lived the simpler life here. For Iolo was old enough to have written an ode after the victory of Cressy. He was certainly sixty, probably seventy, when Glyndwr rose, and he died during the decline of his master's fortunes. It is a coincidence that the greatest of all Welsh poets, Dafydd ap Gwilym, died also at a ripe age in or about 1400, the year the troubles began. But he was the Ovid, the Petrarch of Wales, the poet of love and nature and human nature, an aristocrat too, in his way, of gentle birth and upbringing. One doesn't feel sure that he would have welcomed Owen and the hurly-burly he caused, though for that matter "Iolo" was himself "Lord of Lechryd". But enough for the moment of these old singers. The spirit of the place must be my excuse.

CHAPTER X

DINAS MAWDDWY AND CADER IDRIS

AT the head of Bala Lake there is a brief strip of low country, formed by its three tributary streams, the Twrch, the Little Dee, and the Lliw, on which the village of Llanywchllyn finds ample space to lie at ease amid pleasant pastures. Everywhere behind, however, is a long wall of mountains shutting out the west. But then, again, the west is all mountains till it subsides into the ocean. The road and railroad to the coast drive straight through them to Dolgelly and Barmouth. I have alluded before to the road which, striking south-westward from Llanywchllyn to the Dovey valley and Machynlleth, climbs the formidable pass of the Bwlch-y-groes. This is over 1800 feet, with a steepish cliff edge road for long stretches on the Bala side, and a drop at the far end of 1200 feet in about a mile down to Dinas Mawddwy. It is the highest road-pass in Wales or England and is well worth making acquaintance with, and most certainly on foot for choice. The precipitous back of the Arans, rising 3000 feet above the deep wild valley of the Twrch, is a striking feature of the hither side. On the western descent the sense of precipitous heights all close about one, often clad to their very summits with verdant sward, made a vivid impression when I walked over it alone many years ago that has never faded. In the deep troughs of these bare green steeps, the infant streams that, uniting at their feet, form the Dovey River, make a fine flash and glitter in their sharp descent of 1000 feet.

The pass by which road and rail, running of necessity almost side by side or rather one above the other, squeeze their way through to Dolgelly is not high, but for most of the way extremely narrow. I think on the whole, as sometimes happens when the course of a river controls the passage through a valley, the railroad travellers have the best view. After following up the midmost of the three streams, which, though the smallest of them, has somehow or other secured recognition above Bala as the Dwfrdwy or the Dee, through alder and willow-sprinkled boglands, with Aran Benllyn towering above, the line in due course crosses the watershed. Here we strike the Wnion and become at once entangled in a gorge-like maze of foliage and tumbling waters. For miles the train hugs the channel of this delicious and pellucid torrent, crossing and re-crossing it as compelled from time to time by the rugged nature of the way. I can recall no other bit of railroad in the country shut up for so long on such intimate terms with a mountain stream, burrowing in woods and bosky dingles. Its bright gravelly shallows, its dark swirling pools, its foaming rapids, are often but a fly-cast from the carriage window.

Though but a single track, this is actually a great artery of travel, one of the two main routes to West Wales and the coast. Thousands come through here from every quarter. Thousands too must here for the first time come into close contact with a mountain stream, the most beautiful thing in all nature, and with no sort of counterpart in the twenty-five or so counties in which a majority in this over-populated country live and move and have their being. I wonder what they think of it! How many of them look out of the window. Not a great many, I fancy, besides the Americans, who are far and away the most intelligent of travellers, and much given, by the way, to asking why we go abroad when we have such scenery as this at home. One plausible answer might be expressed in the single word "Hotels". Constantly and in many parts of this fair island I have amused myself in taking stock of the demeanour of my fellow-passengers while passing through regions of uplifting quality either for their beauty or their historic interest. The picture magazines or even worse stuff have nearly always the best of it. A majority of motorists without even the excuse of such literary distractions are just as bad. You have only to glance at their faces in passing some of the masterpieces of nature. It is impossible that they can imbibe much beyond fresh air or feel anything but the pleasant thrill of rapid motion. Probably they do not want to! It is really impossible at times not to wonder what all this uproar amounts to! I am inclined to think that being perched so much higher and travelling so much slower, the passengers on the widely anathematized charabanc carry away more of the beauty of Wales with them than the average occupants of private cars running with their eye on some distant goal at 25 to 40 miles an hour.

The Wnion, and the railroad with it, escapes out of its woody ways into an open valley some little time before sighting Dolgelly. From the grey little town set beside meadowy flats, through which the river, now broad but still brawling, pursues its conspicuous way, the eye is carried up at once to the great mass of Cader Idris towering above it. The day on which I shifted my quarters from the country dominated by the Berwyns whether to the north or south of them, from the land of Glyndwr and of Owen Cyfeiliog, was a dour and misty one. Masses of cloud enshrouded the summit and higher flanks of Cader. The only colouring was the vivid green of the ribbon of meadows beneath it. For the darkest skies cannot dull the verdure of the Welsh pastures. We are accustomed to think of the grass of Blankshire as green. So it is. It astonishes travellers from America, or even France or Holland, and delights the returning exile. But it is not the green of Wales by a long way. To anyone with a normal eye for such things, who has been accustomed to see the two samples on the same day, as must happen to many again and again, the contrast is plain enough and the reason of course equally plain, or should be.

But the next morning all was changed, summer and sunshine had for the moment at any rate returned. My window opened on a scene as dramatic—I can think of no better word—as that from Pen-y-Craig, which I had been accustomed to regard as a unique background to one's shaving operations; for we were here lifted up quite high above Dolgelly and the Wnion valley. But such were mere foreground details. Behind them the entire space to the south was filled with the heaped-up masses of Cader Idris, culminating in its topmost summit, Pen-y-Gader, plain enough now to see, with its fellow-peak Mynydd-Moel, but a hundred feet lower and a trifle to the eastward. Indeed, Cader is a group rather than a single mountain, pushing westward towards the sea in gradually descending ridges and buttresses. Several Welsh mountains bear the prefix Cader, signifying a chair. This particular seat was the one on which the giant Idris, of vague and versatile personality, but sometimes thought to be Arthur, perched himself. Crags and rocks thrown about by him in those fits of petulance with which all these giants were afflicted are littered everywhere about the breast and crown of the great mountain which here, springing literally from the sea-level, rears its head to within a fraction of 3000 feet. The heather was just beginning to flare upon its lower slopes, above the line of wall enclosures, whose tracery all about the foot of the mountain tells its tale in stone of ancient boundaries, of tribal and manorial tenure to my host, who knows more about this intricate subject than any one in Wales.

Dolgelly (the meadow in the hazel trees) did nearly all its growth, such as it is, in the eighteenth century. It seems to have stopped growing with the very modest population of 2000 souls, and a good thing too, seeing how conspicuously it lies in the very heart and hollow of so beautiful a scene. Glyndwr in 1404 held here the council or parliament which resulted in his mission and letter to the French king and his solemn treaty of alliance with that monarch. The old building that tradition pointed to as the house in which it was held was still standing not so very long ago. There is nothing unsightly, nor yet again of particular interest, about Dolgelly, save its situation and its facilities for so many delightful excursions. Furthermore, it is the county capital of Merioneth, and still retains a little of its old flannel industry. Merioneth was an old Welsh cantref covering this district before Edward I gathered others to it and made a county out of them. Like Breconshire, it got its name from one of the sons of Cunedda, the Brythonic chieftain, who in the chaos following the Roman departure swept down here with a host of Britons from Strathclyde, and established their power over wide districts.

The Strathclyde movement into Wales was the aftermath of the turmoil let loose in the north after the departure of the Roman legions, between Picts, Celts and Norsemen, Christians and pagans. Nor must it be forgotten that the ubiquitous Norsemen had found a footing in many of the Welsh ports.

Welsh history, as well as the Welsh language in any concrete sense, may roughly be said to have begun in the fifth and sixth centuries. After the Saxon invasion reduced the size of Wales along the English border, and produced a fairly defined boundary, Saxon influence had little permanent effect beyond it. It may seem paradoxical in view of the centuries of internecine and foreign wars, to say that nothing since then has materially interfered with the essentials of Welsh life, and that in a domestic sense it has run upon its own lines ever since, but it is true enough all the same in a general way. The handful of Norman barons that lorded it in mediæval Wales as Royal Constables or Lord-Marchers, didn't upset the Welsh aristocracy as they had crushed the Saxon thegns. Often they intermarried with them. The Welsh princes merely lapsed into big landed families with abounding progeny absorbed in turn into the lesser gentry, tribal law giving way by slow degrees to manorial custom. Publications setting forth the five royal and fifteen noble tribes of Wales, with the genealogies in full, are accessible to anyone and instructive as a picture of old Welsh social values.

Scarcely any English pedigrees go back to the Norman Conquest, except with lady novelists: comparatively few even to the *novi homines* of the Tudor period. But a Welsh pedigree takes the Norman Conquest in its stride. It is not affected by it, unless by a Norman marriage, which is not to the point. A Welsh pedigree in MSS is a fearsome document. Many people have collections of them, and not only those with ancestors. For I have known quite humble Welshmen, even peasants, with a flair for the genealogy of local families and quite a passion for research and drawing up pedigrees. On the other hand, it should be remembered that most of the Welsh gentry in former days were rather small people and thick upon the land. One may recall the old distich:

"A squire of Wales,
  A knight of Cayles (Calais),
And a laird of the North Countree,
  A yeoman of Kent
  With his yearly rent
Could buy them out all three."

A story hangs upon the rather cryptic second line, irrelevant to these pages.

Roads and trails radiate from Dolgelly into all manner of delectable scenes. On a hill nearly a thousand feet above the town on the north side of the Wnion valley is Nannau, the abode for centuries of the Vaughan family. It was in its park, according to a famous tradition, that Glyndwr killed his cousin Howel Sele, the then owner. They had fallen out on the question of Owen's war, but a reconciliation was attempted by the Abbot of Cymmer, just below Nannau, and Owen came to see his cousin. They were strolling in the park, so runs the story, with two or three attendants, Howel carrying his bow. Feigning to shoot at a deer, Howel swung swiftly round and discharged his arrow full at his cousin's breast. The latter, by good luck or foresight, had a shirt of mail under his tunic and the arrow fell harmlessly to the ground. The fate of Howel was swift but mysterious, at any rate nobody ever set eyes on him again. Owen burnt the house at Nannau, and Pennant tells us its remains were still there in his day. Some forty years after these tragedies a skeleton was found in a hollow oak-tree in Nannau Park, corresponding to the proportions of its missing owner. The oak was living in 1813, and collapsed but a few hours after being sketched by the celebrated antiquary, Sir Richard Colt Hoare. It was twenty-seven feet in girth and had been an object of awe and dread to the natives for the mysterious sounds that emanated from its vast trunk, or in the words of Sir Walter Scott, who was once here, they:

"Bethink them of Glyndowerdy
And shun the spirit's blasted tree."

From the Precipice walk cut along the western slope of the hill on which Nannau stands, the view northward up the Mawddach River, a fine silvery trail coming down its wild valley between the mountains of Ardudwy and those of Offrwm and Rhobel-fawr, is most striking. A good road follows it up for about five miles to a charmingly situated hostelry at Tyn-y-groes, set high above the beautiful stream as it plunges through woods below. After this, unless things have changed, which is not, I believe, the case, it follows an indifferent trail, and swerving westward, where the gold-mines are situated, heads for Trawsfynydd. When I was last here, the waters of the Mawddach were the colour of milk, from the workings of these same mines, a sore outrage on their native clarity. They have now reverted to purity. The offending mine or mines, which never, I think, did more than pay working expenses, have doubtless closed down for the time.

But I didn't spend this precious day of sunshine either revisiting the oak of demons, or the Precipice walk, or ascending the Mawddach valley, none of which, however, should be missed by the stranger in these parts. For a drive to Dinas Mawddwy by the pass of Bwlch-oerddrws and home by the Dovey valley, Corris, and Tal-y-llyn appealed to me more. And away we went through Dolgelly and southward into the wide break between the Cader and the Aran ranges, by fields and farms, woods, parklands, and country houses, and everywhere tumbling streams. At the parting of the ways, where one road goes away to climb the pass of Craig-y-Llam under Cader to Tal-y-llyn, and our own presses on to the higher and longer effort of the Bwlch-oerddrws, the old inn of the Cross Foxes looked to my fancy a bit depressed under the reign of petrol. Time-honoured landmark and house of call in all this Cader country, well it may. What travellers thus driven can be thirsty, except perhaps some driver on a long and exacting journey, and who would encourage a pilot ? The honest thirst of olden days, that of weary walkers and strenuous cyclists, or even horse-drawn travellers who have walked all the hills, brought to these pleasant trysting-places is no more. The bean-feaster, even on a char-à-banc, can, of course, produce a burning one at any moment. But the charabanc patrons, here at least, are not often bean-feasters, but decorous persons rather, taking their drive seriously—so far as one may judge by their conduct and appearance on the road, or when they invade *en masse* the dining-rooms of the hotels.

The mountains about Tal-y-llyn and confronting Cader open out on the right. Ahead of us are the towering green steeps of the Dinas Mawddwy group. Into their solitudes we presently dive and begin to climb the long, lonely pass of Bwlch-oerddrws, or the " cold door ". It is an excellent road, though in the long and twisting descent to Dinas Mawddwy it is unfenced all the way on the outer side, with a sharp drop down to a narrow glen noisy with the tumbling waters of the Ceryst brook. In this topmost village of the long Dovey valley, Dinas Mawddwy, the ruins of the mansion-house of the Buckley family, destroyed by fire some years ago, stand forlornly near the roadside. Their predecessor in the estate was that too famous Jack Mytton, a household word of sorts in the world of sport even yet—though he died some seventy years ago on foreign soil, a bankrupt and in poverty. His fame rests rather on his mad pranks and reckless doings both in the saddle and out of it, than on any particular skill in the domain of sport. Head of one of the oldest families on the Welsh border and inheriting when of age the fine estate of Halston in Shropshire, together with Dinas Mawddwy, he ran through it all by early middle life in such a fashion as to make a stir in the world, the last echoes of which have hardly yet died away, and to embalm his memory in a biography of doubtful utility, even now sometimes read and often alluded to in the Sporting Press.

But some rowdier people than even Jack Mytton haunted this country in the sixteenth century, and one might almost fancy that heady sportsmen had absorbed their unconventional ways of life through the atmosphere of these peaceful-looking hills. For the " red-haired banditti of Mawddwy " were then a terror in the land, till Judge Lewis Owen, Baron of the Exchequer for Wales and Sheriff of Merioneth, was commissioned by the Crown to stamp them out. He made a good beginning, capturing some fourscore of them by leading a force up to their lair on Christmas Eve while they were revelling, hanging them on the spot. A story has it that an old witch, the mother of one of these brigands, flung herself at the feet of the Judge with urgent appeals for mercy. But he, knowing the prisoner to be one of the worst of the lot, showed a deaf ear to the woman's importunities. Enraged at her rebuff, she then tore the kerchief from her bosom and, cursing the Judge, shrieked out: "These yellow breasts have given suck to those who shall wash their hands in your blood!"

Soon afterwards when the Judge on returning from the Assizes at Montgomery was passing through these defiles, a party of the outlaws laid wait for him. Having barred the road with trunks of trees, they fired a flight of arrows into his party which put all but the Judge and his son-in-law to flight. Then falling upon their prey with clubs and spears, they left him dead with thirty wounds upon his body, and the spot has been called *Lydiarty Barwn* ever since. It made a great stir at the time, and all through the ancient cantrefs of Mawddwy and Arwystli the story is told with variations to this day.

For some way yet the Dovey is a brawling but ever broadening torrent, pent between woody hills. The hamlet of Mallwyd is a dream of tumbling waters and overarching foliage. An old-fashioned, ivy-clad hostelry, "The Peniarth Arms", looked much as it used to in old days, when it was a cosy haunt of a handful of anglers and leisurely tourists. But the vale soon opens into a green strath through which the river's silvery streams sweep in wide curves from side to side, sparkling over gravelly shallows or lingering in long deep pools. Near Cemmaes we have passed out of county Meirion into Montgomeryshire, and the railway from Shrewsbury and Welshpool comes down from the high watershed between the Severn and the Dovey, through which its builders, baffled for a time, at length hewed and blasted their way. One of the gems of Welsh railway travel is the descent from Carno and Llanbrynmair beside the rushing torrent of the Twymyn, not for the foreground and the stream as in the dingles of the Wnion, but for the gorgeous view ahead and below of the Dovey valley, the mountains of the Cader range beyond it, and to the left the high ramparts of the Plynlimmon wilderness which we shall penetrate in a later chapter.

Travelling easily and halting now and again, as every bit of the country had a strong appeal to each one of our small party, the day had lost its bloom and grown grey as we turned out of the Dovey valley at Machynlleth and took the road through the mountains by Corris, which in four or five miles opens out the lovely little lake of Tal-y-llyn. Corris itself is handed over to an orgy of slate-quarrying, the mountains gashed and hewn away on every side and vast piles of refuse by the roadside making this dreary interlude of a mile or so one of unrelieved depression. Still, after all, there is no smoke with a quarry. It is astonishing how these fearsome upheavals of earth's fairest scenes conceal themselves among the mountains, till you come right upon them with quite a shock. Corris is one of the half-dozen chief centres of the industry in North Wales, but as in the others, one has forgotten all about it in five minutes, and is traversing the low green pastures beyond which the little lake gleams beneath the majestic southern front of Cader and laps its very feet.

Tal-y-llyn is rather a gem among Welsh lakes. It is only about a mile long, but though mountains rise on every side, it is not a wild tarn. It has always lain on a travelled mountain highway between Dolgelly and Towyn on the coast. A picturesque little church in a grove, a couple of cosy old-fashioned inns, sit on its banks at the lower end where the Dysanni River plunges out of it in short cascades to water the narrow meadowy vale below, which winds down through pastures and little homesteads to the village of Abergonolwyn. From here a toy railroad runs through delightful mountain and valley scenery to Towyn and the coast. Though for generations connected with the lower world, this serene and peaceful spot seemed always far removed from it. Motoring no doubt has made a great difference. But in old days the toilsome and indifferent roads that led up here from Dolgelly on the one hand, and the coast on the other, a dozen miles or so of each, were not much in favour with the horse traffic. Such as there was, too, was almost limited to August.

In May and June this was an ideal spot. It must be said that it has been ever and always a famous lake for trout, and the Tyn-y-cornel inn for generations was one of those homelike though plain haunts that anglers used to love. It was almost worth while being a fisherman merely to have the privilege of enjoying it. For I do not think that between April and July, when the spot in its beautiful seclusion could be

CADER IDRIS AND LLYN-Y-CAE

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best enjoyed, any unbeliever would have been tolerated! It was one of those old eggs-and-bacon, fried trout, mountain mutton, and home-baked bread havens, with farm and dairy attached, that held its patrons in long and firm allegiance. You were lucky if you could slip in for a week between their dates, which were almost as fixed as the calendar itself. I was fortunate in this way more than once, and can vividly recall the glories of the June mornings, before the ripple that we whistled for had begun to disturb the placid surface of the lake and blur the outlines of crag and mountain mirrored in its glassy surface. But this was a long time ago. The family in possession for some two generations, who bore of course the good old traditional patronymic and had the "gift" for this kind of entertaining, have passed away, and who reigns now at Tal-y-llyn I have no notion. For, in truth, it is a gift, this kind of inn-keeping, commoner in Wales perhaps than in rural England. For the Welsh women are on the whole, I think, more capable and energetic. The desire to please is certainly more general and the standard of manners more gracious, and after all, manners are an enormous asset! It is the lack of them, the incapacity of our hotel-keepers and their high prices, that sends thousands of people abroad every year. Though the North Briton, when in his walks abroad he encounters such unaccustomed amenities among country folk, whether in the South or Wales, is persuaded into the conviction that he is going to be swindled.

Cader Idris can be conveniently ascended from the foot of the lake—I, at any rate, have always climbed it this way. It is stiff walking rather than climbing, though I do not remember any trail till you near the rocky summit. Indeed, there is no need of one on this western slope. It is the other sides of the mountain, facing north and east, that are rugged and precipitous. It is from the side overlooking Barmouth and Dolgelly, and on recognized tracks, that most visitors make the ascent. It is the only mountain in North Wales, except Snowdon, that is regularly ascended by all and sundry, and on whose summit on a fine day in August there would be sure to be company. Several mountain-tops are over the 3000 feet, an elevation that Cader does not quite reach. None, however, in Merionethshire have quite so fine a view. It has the same central advantage as the Berwyns and the sea outlook as well, being practically on the coast. The precipitous drop, too, of several hundred feet from its summit into the little lake of Llyn-y-cae is a fine piece of rock-work. And from the mountain-top you can look down on the infant stream of the Dysanni spouting out of the tarn and glittering down, a white trail, through the green valley to lose itself for a time in Tal-y-llyn. These after all are but memories. This grey afternoon I could but revive them by a passing look at the lake, its surface stirred by a breeze a shade too chill for midsummer. A boat or two, each bearing a patient angler, was drifting down the middle as of yore and as they have drifted here for about a hundred years. There was the old grey-roofed, white-walled inn, the little church on the woody knoll, the smaller inn just across the water, doubtless now a rival. Nothing seemed changed. But where were they whose names, whether as hosts or guests, were household ones inseparable from the place? In truth, I was not sorry that our road back to Dolgelly turned away by the head of the lake. I was not anxious to encounter ghosts and shadows, nor yet to strike any jarring notes on the still tuneful chords of these particular memories.

It is a stiffish climb up the pass between the rocky eastern shoulder of Cader and those of the steep cliffs of Craig-y-Llam—a couple of miles perhaps, and then a long run down through a wildish country to the "Cross Foxes" again on the Dolgelly road. I was interested in noting, and indeed sorry to note, that the little reedy tarn of Trigraienyn near the top of the pass by the side of the road is now but a sedgy bog. Possibly this is due to the unprecedented drought of 1921 which has left such indelible marks all over the country. For the Lake-of-the-three-grains must have existed for centuries, seeing that the three grains were rocks which the giant Idris picked out of his shoe and flung down here in a fit of petulance. A strange thing happened in connexion with this shallow little tarn in the 'eighties of the last century. Though it is a fish story, and may fall under the suspicion that a censorious world has so unjustly fastened upon all anglers' tales, this one is perfectly true. Nor is it of the cryptic, dry-fly purist type to choke off the layman at the first utterance. A babe could appreciate this one, which is open to the retort that only a babe could believe it, but I can't help that.

Now the lakelet was so small you could have tossed a stone across it anywhere, and so clear and shallow one could see the bottom from end to end. There were presumably no trout in it, for no one conversant with such matters would have expected there to be. Nor did any traveller upon this oft-travelled road, even if he gave a thought to it, ever suspect this transparent, shallow pool of containing anything larger than a minnow. One fine day, however, a local worthy driving by saw what he believed to be, though he could scarcely credit his eyes, a monster trout, sailing around. So, of course, he stopped at the inn at Tal-y-llyn where, being May-time, its angling habitués were all there in force, and related the astounding vision that he had seen. Being a man of probity and conversant with all sporting matters, the company were greatly moved; and that same evening one of the chief prophets among them, a half-pay colonel, armed for the fray, set off for the head of the pass. I knew him well, in fact he was a relative, and he often told me the tale of the great capture, which was a brief one and of slight interest compared to the mystery of the trout itself. It is sufficient here that the fish in due course seized the natural minnow that was offered him, and with avidity, having probably cleared the pool by then of its live stock. After a lively contest, he was successfully brought to bank and weighed just five pounds. His captor, who was something of an artist, made a sketch of him to life size, which was framed and hung on the parlour wall. And when I was last at the Tyn-y-Cornel inn—a great many years ago, to be sure—it was still hanging there and may be yet for aught I know. It kept the tongues of the wisest wagging for many a year, but the mystery remained as insoluble as ever. How a fish in a small, clear, shallow pool by the roadside, without the smallest sign of a watercourse running in or out of it, could have grown from nothing to that portentous size, a perfect whale in these mountains, without discovering himself till that fatal moment when he was betrayed by a wayfarer into the hands of his hereditary foes. Pebble-pool, its English name, as I have said, had suddenly dried up after all these centuries, and the mysterious life-story of that *sockdolager* has died with it.

CHAPTER XI

BARMOUTH AND THE ARDUDWY ROAD

THE number of roads, paths, and trails, always enjoyable in themselves and leading to scenes of beauty, that radiate from Dolgelly are a positive source of embarrassment to all the guide-book writers. Happily I have no such distracting obligations, and will only ask the reader to come with me by the coast route to the Snowdon mountains, the object of my next re-visitation, and bear with such philanderings as the passing scenes evoke. The northern shore of the Mawddach estuary to Barmouth was naturally the first stage, to use an obsolete horse-traffic phrase. It is even more wonderful, I think, than the south shore road. For you are always looking across to the Cader range, which in stature and outline has some advantage of the Ardudwy or Rhinog mountains that dominate the northern shore.

I was again in luck. For the morning at least was brilliant, and more than any perhaps of the gems of Welsh scenery, the Mawddach estuary needs and responds to sunshine. From Dolgelly to tide-water is about two miles, and the road there winds through pendant woods with the last reaches of the Wnion brawling unseen below. Suddenly the scene opens wide. We cross the meadowy flats through which the Mawddach River coming down from the north plays its last though subdued melodies as a mountain stream, and the Wnion in like chastened mood comes out into the open at the same time upon our left. The two streams, here uniting, meet the head of tidal influence, and, broadening into a tidal river, mark the head of the famous estuary, half a mile or so in width, which now opens out between the mountains to Barmouth and the sea. A little way up the Mawddach valley before its junction are the ruins of the

Cistercian abbey of Cymmer, romantically set on a green meadow by the riverside. It was founded about the same time as Valle Crucis by two brothers, chieftains of the North Wales house of Cynan.

It is eight miles from here to Barmouth, and our road, hugging the mountain foot, skirts the estuary for most of the way. But it is not from here, after all, that one gets the *coup d'œil* which many people hold to be a scene unmatched in all our island, but from the lower end, notably from the long bridge at Barmouth which crosses the mouth, or, even better, from the hill above the town. But this waterside road is in truth sufficiently beautiful—fringed on one side or the other by woods revelling in the luxuriance of a mild, moist climate, facing the south, and shut off by mountain walls from every breath of the cold winds that rage betimes over the rugged heights far above them. To our surprise, though it was but early July, a curtain of heather in full bloom laid a thousand feet of radiant purple (though is not heather somewhat brighter than purple ?) from near the roadside to the azure skyline. Here and there vistas opened through the foliage to the estuary, already with the inflowing tide a lake from shore to shore. Little torrents spouting from the mountain steeps above crossed or dived under roads, to hurry down through avenues of birch and oak, of larch and mountain ash, towards the shore. Country houses now and again made their near presence felt by the extra touch of luxuriance in shrub and grove that two or three generations of care and culture have given to this mountain foot and waterside.

Gorse flares and heather riots among grey, fir-crested, craggy islets that the receding tides leave like stranded ships upon the golden sands. The gold, too, of those Mawddach sands when the sun has dried and warmed them, and the river but a winding stream in their midst hastening to the sea, is no figure of speech but a memorable fact with all who know this matchless scene. From time to time, through breaks in the skirting woods, or on rising to higher ground, one looks across to the opposite shore, luxuriant like this one with woods and hanging meadows, cloven here and there by bosky glens descending through rugged

HARLECH CASTLE

SNOWDON FROM CAPEL CURIG

foot-hills from the high flanking ridge of Cader that overlooks the estuary to its mouth. It is from the " Panorama walk " on a height just above Barmouth, or again from the footbridge at the river-mouth, nearly a mile in length, that this glorious scene, as I have said, shows in its highest perfection. For as the estuary expands in its descent from half a mile to thrice that distance, and narrows again where it comes and goes with swift current into the sea, it forms at high tide a lake winding inland for some eight miles between lofty and shapely mountains, while those beyond Dolgelly cluster around its head. Nor is it merely the " composition " of the picture that enraptures all beholders, but the colouring of both margin and mountain.

I have said enough, perhaps, of the former for the understanding of how effective are the curves of these luxuriant shores in a *coup d'œil* of the whole scene, rimming the blue water with their verdure at high tide, or the golden sand at its ebb. Three thousand feet is no great height in the geography books, but these mountains rise from sea-level, and then again in our moist and misty atmosphere with its ever-shifting lights and shades, the height of mountains, if of reasonable elevation, ceases to count. These are high enough and majestic enough for any æsthetic purpose: to double the altitude of Snowdon or Cader or Helvellyn wouldn't make a pin's difference, but to halve their height would make all the difference in the world. Yet I would lower even that qualification by a good deal when I remember how the Malvern Hills sometimes look from Worcester!

This is how the fighting poet-prince, before mentioned, Hywel ap Owain Gwynedd, in the twelfth century, invoked the scene he loved, and that he died trying to wrest from his brother:

" A wave of white foam sweeps hard by its hamlets,
And as it speeds it is like the silvery rime.
I love that sea strand of Meirionydd
Where a snow-white arm was my pillow.
I love to hear in the thickets of privet
The nightingale's note by the far-famed meeting of the waters."

Barmouth to-day is frankly the haunt of the cheerful tripper. But, after all, it is round the corner and hidden from the estuary.

I have often heard old people who used to go there on reading parties from college, eighty or ninety years ago, talk of its sequestered charms in those remote days. If it had remained a fishing village climbing up the mountain-side, it would be picturesque still. Even yet, in its vastly expanded state, its modernity is modified by the rugged background which its builders have had to climb. But there are capital sands, with most lovely views from them of sea and mountain, and far away rugged coast-lines stretching westward to the verge of sight. We sat on them for an hour in the welcome sunshine, watching joyful companies from the Midlands disporting themselves in a tranquil sea—not as yet a crowd in these early July days. I spent the month of May here many years ago, and I think I was the only visitor in the whole place, with a single exception. And I should not have known of that hapless wight if he had not been drowned, and his body fished out just in front of my windows. One advantage of Barmouth is that one can walk straight out on to the mountains behind it and begin to climb at once. This, I may repeat, is the Ardudwy or Rhinog range, which skirts the sea northwards, though at a rather respectful distance, till it joins the great Snowdon group near Festiniog.

This mountain seaboard from here to Portmadoc and Carnarvonshire formed in old days the compact cantref of Ardudwy, whose menkind, it may be remembered, made that unlucky raid on the ladies of Dyffryn Clwyd. These old boundaries still hold good in Welsh life: church divisions, agricultural or musical societies, and the like make practical use of them and keep their names in remembrance. The Welsh counties patched together by English kings are mostly straggling and disjointed units. As regards North Wales, there is no county feeling as we understand it in England, where the shires are of an ancient and sometimes tribal origin. North and South Wales, to be sure, don't much like each other, and speak rather different varieties of the common tongue. Cardiganshire, again, with its face to the western sea and its rear cut off absolutely from the rest of Wales by a semicircle of mountains, is a land unto itself. But I don't think the North Welsh counties qua counties, unless it be

Anglesey as an island, have any self-consciousness, any esprit de corps, though some districts have a good deal.

The clouds had gathered heavily on the mountains by the afternoon of that day of radiant promise, and a light drizzle was falling on the world below when I went on to Portmadoc by a leisurely train along the coast. But I had no intention of stopping by the way, though in passing so many familiar scenes, whether wrapped in clouds or merely sad under a drizzling rain, I may be moved to lift the curtain and to linger in the spirit here and there. I knew the land of Ardudwy so well and in such comparatively recent years and had wandered so much about it, that I decided to spend the weeks remaining to me in regions not quite so familiar. Both road and railway hug the coast. They have no choice, and the former has a distinct advantage in its outlook. Harlech, the only place of fame along the route, is about midway. All along it the Rhinog mountains or their outworks, with their notched and rugged tops, lie back upon the right. Sloping pasture farms, with their stone houses set in little groves of trees, trend downwards to the railway. Seaward from it stretch flat and lonely marshlands, the Morfa Dyffryn, a mile in breadth, sometimes much more, to an unpeopled and lonely shore. Streams come down at intervals from the mountains, cutting deep woody dingles through the bleak stone-walled pastures, and burrowing under road and railway track. Here they quickly subside into sluggish dykes to wander out into the Morfa, and through reeds and swamp grass by dwarf willow and stunted alders to find their slow and tortuous way to the sea.

Easily visible, just where the largest of these brooks, the Ysgethin, comes out of a glen in the mountains, stands among wind-battered woods the ancient mansion of Cors-y-gedol, in bygone times the stronghold of the Vaughans, who are said to have once owned the whole land of Ardudwy. One of them, who sat in Parliament for Merioneth in the reign of Charles II, was so fat that the folding-doors of the house had to be both opened whenever he passed in or out. It must have been he who entertained the King at Cors-y-gedol, for when I was there some twenty odd years ago, the then owner showed me the room in which Charles II had slept, kept inviolate ever since, save that the bed had just been removed. I never question a Queen Elizabeth bed, for as a country-house visitor she was insatiable ; nor, again, the haunts of Charles I, poor man, who had against his will to sleep in so many beds in so many countries. I didn't venture, nor do I now, to doubt so strong a local tradition as this one of his son ! But I should like to know, as he certainly did not come here on the flight from Worcester, when that easy-going monarch out of mere compliment made the prodigious effort required in those days of a ride across Wales, to say nothing of England. But if he did, being the indefatigable walker that strange to say he was, to the distraction, as we know, of his courtiers, he probably climbed up Diphwys, which lifts its crown some 2500 feet above Cors-y-gedol. Unless peradventure the gigantic proportions of his host, the fat knight, held him in check.

A little farther on, a far more important rift in the mountains opens on to the Morfa Dyffryn. For at Llanbedr village and station the Artro comes down with much commotion over its rocky bed to subside into a small tidal river, winding between mud-banks to the sea. For up here in this Artro valley are two places of fame in North Wales. To be precise, about a mile up the stream divides, the left hand and northerly fork leading to Cwm Bychan, the other, known as Nant Col, coming down from the Drws Ardudwy. Both valleys terminate in passes for foot travellers only, over the Rhinog mountains, amid scenes of rugged grandeur and desolation. Rough lanes passable for horse vehicles before the war, but of what like now I know not, and that serve many small mountain farms, lead up to a finish before both of these grim barriers.

Mostly beside the margin of the limpid and impetuous Artro, the Cwm Bychan track stumbles rockily along through wild woods of birch, larch, and mountain oaks. Grey boulders lie strewn about amid the undergrowth of bilberry, heath, and fern. Rocky knolls, overlaid with crisp sward, rise promiscuously in the open glades, bearing their immemorial burdens of gnarled and stunted oaks, relics of the indigenous forests that in olden days covered the lower slopes at least of all these Welsh mountains. Open interludes give glimpses of coombes and hollows but half-tamed from wild nature by the primitive needs of little mountain farms. While always ahead of us the rugged outline of the Rhinogs, drawing ever nearer, cuts the sky. Such is the impression that remains with me of many walks from the mouth of the Artro at Llanbedr to its source in the lake of Cwm Bychan, which, tucked under the mountains amid a savage scene of crags and rocks, makes a most imposing finish to this charming five-mile tramp through an upland Arcady.

Wild as is Cwm Bychan, a veritable cul-de-sac and end of all things, it yet cherishes in its inmost solitudes a quite curious human story. For set among the bogs and rock-strewn wastes beyond the head of the lake and on the very toes of the Rhinog mountains, stands a small and ancient stone dwelling. A generation or two back, this little house with all the rock, land, and water visible from it, was still owned by the Lloyds or Llwyds of Cwm Bychan, who had occupied this sterile-looking wilderness with its patchy interludes of moor grass, in direct descent for eight centuries. They were not of peasant blood, but armigers and *generosi*, these Llwyds of Cwm Bychan. Pennant, the Flintshire squire, antiquary and horseback traveller, stopped here for the night with the owner in 1773, and describes his establishment and mode of life—an almost peasant *ménage*, yet with no little pride of birth and a portentous pedigree ending in a Prince of Powys, which Pennant transcribes. The visitor was regaled with strong ale, salted goats' flesh, home-made cheese, and milk. There was no access to the place in winter. It was always provisioned in autumn. The family mascot was an ancient cup made from a bull's scrotum. The tenant, whom I used to know, estimated the total earning power of this ancient hereditary domain as the profits on 600 small mountain sheep, which was its limit of grazing capacity even in these advanced days, save for a small meadow at the lake head. It is quite certain, too, that no heiress would have consented to such immolation as would have been her fate up here, to swell the exchequer of these primitive squires, unless one of them repeated the enterprise of his remote Ardudwy ancestors and made a raid on his own account over the Roman steps. Yet a Llwyd of Cwm Bychan followed Henry Tudor to Bosworth Field, and had a poem dedicated to him by a contemporary bard of note. The Holmes of Mardale in Westmoreland are something of a parallel to this—a case familiar to all intelligent lovers of the Lake country. But the head of Mardale is nothing like so grimly sterile as Cwm Bychan, and the Holmes were statesmen, not *generosi*. Surely no armigers in Great Britain ever maintained their gentility for centuries out of such a welter of rock.

One side of the lake lies under the shadow of the Craig-y-Saeth, the "crag of the arrow", nearly 1000 feet of naked rock. Across its head the rugged ramparts of the Rhinogs, their broken and tortured flanks and hollows littered with ten thousand crags and boulders, cut the sky. Up through a narrow cut in this mountain wall climbs that long, mysterious stone stairway known as the *Roman steps*. There must be several hundred of them, some sections more perfect than others, laid obviously by hand and extending for perhaps half a mile.

But by what hand and when? Certainly by no mediæval Welshman. The Welsh don't forget things that were done a trifle of six or seven hundred years ago, nor is there any Welsh tradition about this work, nor could there have been any object in it. The earliest Llwyd of Cwm Bychan, when he went over into the Trawsfynnyd valley, unquestionably climbed these mysterious stairs. It is the only way out eastward. What did he think about them? Did he, too, just call them the "Roman steps"? For since the time of the Romans there could have been no conceivable object in undertaking such a heavy job. In short, they must be Roman work, and were doubtless laid for the conveyance of copper or lead ore from the mines then worked in West Wales down to the *Sarn Helen*, the Roman road just across the mountain. Whether the burdens were carried and the steps, which are mostly broad and shallow till approaching the top of the Pass, trodden by slaves or pack-mules, we may guess as we choose, nor does it much matter. At any rate, the staircase is still one of the mysteries of West Britain.

The twin valley of Nant-Col is of much the same character as that of the Artro. The last two or three miles, however, are bare and open, with some small farms strung along the line of the stream. Away beyond the last of these in a patch of green meadow, beside which, amid a wild waste and savage litter of volcanic rock and crag, is the anceint farmhouse of Maes-y-Garnedd, the ancestral home of that same Colonel Jones whom we met as owner also of the *World's End* near Llangollen. Maes-y-Garnedd (the field of rocks) is well named. The guide-books give it the distinction of being the loneliest farmhouse in North Wales, for Cwm Bychan now hardly amounts to a farm. All around is a wild scene of crag, cliff, and boulder. The twin mountains of the Rhinogs, fawr and fach, stand above it on the right and left. Over the rocky col between them climbs a natural path or stairway into the Trawsfynnydd valley, passable in this case for ponies.

It is a quaint, though plain, old house this, dating from 1600, and its occupants, when I knew it at any rate, were lineal descendants, though I think on the female side, of the famous regicide. Methinks a man born and bred in this outlandish recess in the Welsh mountains, who could fight his way to such conspicuous place and power, and marry the Protector's sister, must have been made of no common stuff. The last time I was up here, just before the war, we were glad enough of the shelter of the house from one of the most terrific thunderstorms I ever saw in this country. The ceaseless fork-lightning playing against such a savage background gave one the feeling that this lonely dwelling was almost courting destruction, till one reminded oneself it had braved these things intact for several centuries. The crashing of the thunder and its reverberations among these stern crags and cliffs was a thing to be remembered.

There are several little tarns sprinkled about among these high crags. One of them, a half-hour's steep climb above Maes-y-Garnedd, lies amid a perfect chaos of boulders under the highest point of the Rhinog fach, and looks any depth. I scrambled up to it once with a botanist acquaintance, as certain lichens grow on the crags found, I believe, nowhere else in Britain. I took a rod with me on this occasion and discovered the tarn to be crammed with absurdly small trout about five inches long with hideously big heads, who competed briskly with one another for my flies. Cwm Bychan Lake, on the other hand, contains nice trout which for some mysterious reason refuse to be caught. Sewin, too, run freely up the Artro in the season and into the lake itself.

Continuing north from Llanbedr, by rail or road, the Morfa Dyffryn draws to a point and disappears, out-thrusting hills here meeting the sea. Approaching Harlech, the upland again retires, and the thinner and southern end of the Morfa Harlech begins to intervene between hill and sea. The pose of Harlech Castle is magnificent, and there is enough of it left with its curtain walls and lofty drum towers to do justice to its perch and make the majestic picture with which most people, on paper at any rate, are familiar. But neither brush nor pencil can do full justice to Harlech. It was one of the fortresses built by Edward I to overawe the Welsh after the conquest of the last portions of Wales which still resisted, and the death of the last Llewelyn, " Lord of Snowdon " and " Prince of North Wales ", though by that time a very much reduced North Wales. The castle is said to be the work of de Elfreton, the same architect that built Conway and Carnarvon. Planted four-square on a projecting rock with three perpendicular sides, it looks proudly out over land and sea. Below it on the levels which the tides covered when it was built, and till comparatively recently, Harlech golfers now disport themselves. Let us hope they value the privilege of spending their days in the presence of such majestic scenes, as very often one of them I know that used to. For it is not only the castle towering above, but in facing northward from the links you have behind it as a background the whole Snowdon range crowned by the peak, the Wyddfa, the monarch himself.

The interior of the ruin, with its grassy floor, encompassed by its four high walls, lends itself admirably to the pageants and festivals which are now frequently held within it. When I first set eyes on the little townlet in the mid-eighties, stretching along the high ridge beside its overawing castle, it catered, I think, very little for visitors. I well remember, as I looked down upon the furzy sheep pasture stretching to the sandhills half a mile away, which shut out the sea, saying to a companion who understood, "What a golf-course this would make!" There was not one in all Wales at that time and barely a dozen in all England. Ten years later I was playing over the beginnings of the beautiful course that now exists, and is known throughout the whole golfing world. It has crowded Harlech in the holiday season with visitors, occasioned the building of a great hotel and quite a string of private residences.

But this has made no difference. It wasn't the old village that counted, though in the Middle Ages it had been relatively important, but the castle, the surrounding hills, and the inspiring and spacious outlook over land and sea. Not merely over Snowdon, but along the whole peninsula of Lleyn with its broken rocky coast-line and upstanding, isolated mountain groups, and away to that *ultima thule* of North Wales, the distant cliffs of Bardsey Island and Aberdaron. Winter, too, deals tenderly with Harlech, while the east winds of early spring rage impotently against the back of the mountain wall beneath whose front it shelters. And again, the sunsets at that season, as seen from here over Cardigan Bay on a calm sea, are unforgettable. That glittering band of gold which from the horizon, in ever-broadening trail, spreads its radiant effulgence, to fade only on the very sand dunes at our feet. For one is always high up at Harlech, looking over a wide sea and an amazingly varied world of mountain and plain.

There are no ships upon this sea, but a few odd fishing-boats. They give it a wide berth. For there is a submarine stone embankment occasionally visible at low water, some miles out, known as Sarn Bwch (the causeway of the buck). It meets another of a like kind, Sarn Badrig (the ship-breaking causeway). They have been always the terror of navigators. Above all, they are a mystery. Tradition has it that they defined the limits of the drowned cantref of Gwaelod, once a populous and thriving district, and that these walls were built to keep out the sea. About the year A.D. 500, one Saethenin, the keeper of the flood gates, so runs the story, being drunk, forgot to close them at the necessary hour. The sea broke in with irresistible force and all was up with the cantref of Gwaelod.

Song and legend have been busy with its story, and the traditions are curiously exact in detail. Peacock celebrates it in the "Sorrows of Elphin". But there are the mysterious causeways "whatever", miles and miles of them, as every sailor well knows. So here are two of the great mysteries of Britain, the Sarn Badrig and the Roman steps, within sight of one another, in the old land of Ardudwy in the county of Merioneth.

Though this chapter is only by way of being the *obiter dicta* of a short railway journey, the eye of memory is proving rather too insistent and I am exceeding my good intentions. But it is impossible to leave Harlech without some allusion to the stirring march which has carried its name round and round the world. The air is an old one, though the words, as already stated, are by Ceiriog Hughes. They were inspired by the defence of the castle in the Lancastrian cause by Dafydd ap Ivan against a force under Sir Richard Herbert dispatched by Edward IV. It held out against Herbert for months, and when the gallant defender was importuned from many sides to surrender, he answered that in the French wars he had held a castle long enough to set all the old women in France talking of him, and that he intended to hold this one till the tongues of all the old women in Wales were wagging. But under the pressure of hunger, Dafydd ap Ivan was at length forced to capitulate, but only with the promise of a pardon for himself and his garrison. After the surrender, the king boggled at confirming Herbert's terms, till the latter swore he would put the whole garrison and its captain back again in the castle and take the punishment himself rather than break his word to the brave old Welshman. This settled the matter.

Owen Glyndwr had his headquarters at Harlech for a long time and held a parliament there. His family were in the castle when it stood a quite protracted siege, the privations of which were said to have been the death of Edmund Mortimer. It was one of the last castles, too, to surrender to the Parliament in the Civil Wars, and our old friend, Colonel Jones of Maes-y-Garnedd, was the man who ultimately captured it. That such a site as this would be left virgin all the centuries before

Edward I selected it, together with Aberystwith, for overaweing West Wales was not likely. It is believed to have been the seat of Collwyn ap Tangno in the tenth century, and later, a name which occurs constantly in Welsh heraldry and genealogy as founder of one of the fifteen noble tribes of Wales. Of the prehistoric period, however, there is any amount of story and legend. But of the wonderful achievements of King Brân the blessed, who had here his perch, and of his sister, Bronwen the white bosomed, who became a queen in Ireland for a time, I must refer the reader to the pages of the "Mabinogion".

To-day as I craned my head out of the train window to look up at the castle towering above the little station at its foot, a drizzling rain was beating the face of the great rock, and the castle towers pushed their stark heads up into the driving clouds. This was sad, as Harlech comes back to me from the years just before the war, when the sun, whether in spring or summer, seems to have been always shining, when the Snowdon mountains were seldom shrouded, and that long, glowing southern coast of Lleyn used to respond so gloriously to the morning light as one sat at breakfast. But other things come back to me, too, not only because Harlech is suggestive of martial doings, but that while writing this chapter a memorial has been unveiled at Wrexham, in Denbighshire, to the members of the forty-two battalions of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, the special Regiment of North Wales, who gave their lives in the war—420 officers and 10,000 men. But forty-two battalions!

Not long before the war, recruiting in North Wales was literally at zero. The Regiment, with colours flying and drums beating and pipes playing "Men of Harlech" and other national airs, marched right round the country, with the laudable design of stimulating the martial ardour of these anti-militarists. I was at Harlech at the time, and it was said, though with a touch of hyperbole, no doubt, that not a single youth was converted from that faith. At any rate, the attitude of Wales, generally outside the industrial areas, and of North Wales particularly, towards the "Old Contemptibles" was deplorable. Thanks largely to the Nonconformist clergy, it had come to pass that enlistment was accounted as a sort of moral obliquity and social crime. The recruit was regarded almost as a lost soul, to be looked at askance by his neighbours when he returned as a soldier on furlough. It was of no use to argue that if all Great Britain followed suit we should be at the world's mercy. It was a domestic and provincial question, quite unconcerned with the outside world among the element responsible for this strange obsession. The designs of Germany were altogether outside its purview, for its Liberal leaders had denied their existence and ridiculed all those who sounded the warning note. It was waste of breath to remind these excellent people that the working-class families of Kent or Sussex were proud of their sons and brothers in the Army and Navy, seeing that they held the Army as a sort of front gate to Hades. That the young British soldiers of the twentieth century were as well behaved a set of men as any class in the country was beyond their belief, and as they never came in contact with soldiers, this strange superstition held the field stubbornly.

It so came about that I was staying near a little country town in central Wales not long before the war, when three regiments of the line descended on it and encamped for a field training, within three miles, for a month—an unprecedented event in its history. The chapel elders and all concerned were panic-stricken at the prospect of these wolves descending on their folds — Mammon in its rowdiest form thus brought to their very gates! It was dreadful! I was there most of the time, and when the soldiers struck their tents and marched away. It had been an absolutely staggering revelation to the unco' guid, and even to those who had small pretensions to be such, but were merely prejudiced. They had seen a lot of clean-looking, well-behaved lads in their off-hours walking quietly about the town and country in twos and threes, and not even patronizing the public-houses to any extent. I was amused to note that not one of them ever walked with a girl, though it was an English-speaking district. I suppose the decree had gone forth! At any rate, the whole thing was a revelation to these ingenuous souls, who had no idea that the British soldier in peace-time was that sort of man. And when the bands played at the camp on stated evenings, the whole town and neighbourhood being, of course, musical, poured out to hear them, at first shyly and then in a body. I saw these troops, as I have said, march away, and it was amidst the hearty cheers of the most disillusioned crowd of people that ever was seen.

However, the war fell as elsewhere on this most pacific corner of Great Britain, for rural South Wales had not been so much obsessed of this prejudice, with the result as stated, that the Regiment swelled to forty-two battalions, and there is not a town or village of any size in the country that has not its war memorial, standing by roadside or in churchyard, telling a full tale of local sacrifice.

CHAPTER XII

BEDDGELERT

IT was raining hard when I alighted on the familiar platform at Portmadoc station, which was crowded, and a long train drawn up by it, packed with children and young people, upon whose exuberant spirits the falling rain and surrounding gloom had no apparent effect. An elderly person who had evidently been bracing himself up to bear it at the hotel across the way, bore unsteadily down upon me and proclaimed, with much elation, that seven hundred choirs were competing at Criccieth that afternoon and that he was proud of Wales. A well-meant effort, no doubt, to indicate that seven hundred voices were to cheer up Mr. Lloyd George's native town. I was myself bound for Beddgelert, about eight miles distant, and had assumed that some sort of conveyance as of yore would be running there at intervals. I did not know that a light railroad had just been made across the Traethmawr. This was convenient, but I felt a passing pang that the solitude of this great level, fenceless, houseless pasture-land should have been thus invaded.

The station proved to be half a mile away, out in the country, approached by footpaths, and I discovered with some difficulty that a train would leave it in an hour. One discomfort of getting there was alleviated by a timely clearance of the weather, and the problem of my luggage was solved by the advent of an elderly person, with the unmistakable air of a local character about him. All this took time. For the railway porters obviously had no use for the little railroad and knew no more of its ways and its hours than if it were the branch line across Romney Marsh. I had tipped one of them to mount the bridge with me and point out the line of country beyond which

LLYN DINAS

ABERGLASLYN PASS

its terminal station lay. However, we got there nicely, with half an hour to wait. The clouds in the meantime had lifted a bit, and the familiar form of Moel Gest rising behind the little town of slate and stone and fishing interests was quite clear to its summit. My conductor was a conversationalist of the first water. He talked Welsh-English of a free and most diverting kind, and before the little train started had laid bare every innermost secret of Portmadoc's social, commercial, and sectarian condition. He was so illuminating and entertaining that I added a trifle to his most moderate charge. I think, too, he appreciated me as a listener, for he was quite effusive in his hopes that we should meet again, and as a parting word bestowed on me the last of many unconscious flowers of speech : " Indeed, sir, the next time I see you I shall jump to you ! " which sounded mercenary, but I really don't think it was !

The little train across the Traethmawr (the big marsh) and through the Aberglaslyn Pass was similar to the others of its kind in Wales, those, for instance, at Festiniog, Towyn, and the Devil's Bridge. The Traeth covers several thousand acres, and more than a century ago was reclaimed from the sea and the estuary of the Glaslyn River. Our train to Portmadoc had run parallel with the great embankment, a mile or more in length, that had been raised about 1810 to push back the waters. It is some six miles across the Traeth to the mountain wall out of which the Glaslyn issues through its famous pass. As the little train joggled and puffed slowly along its lonely way by patches of pasture, bits of hay ground, odds and ends of grain crops and even intervals of gorse and broom, I couldn't help contrasting the ragged look of this fine stretch of alluvial land reclaimed at so much cost and labour with the clean grass lands of Romney Marsh, for the full and sufficient reasons that I look out upon them every day of my life, and, further, that they too were reclaimed in like fashion from the sea.

I had never actually crossed the Traeth before. The roads all skirt it, for nobody to speak of lives upon it, and the lands, I think, are rented by farmers on the surrounding uplands. I was grateful to the little train for that reason, but could not help fancying that if poor Mr. Maddox, who lost his fortune over this really great enterprise, came to life again he would be disappointed. And there, on the steep mountain ridge, running from Tremadoc, his own town on the land he reclaimed, to Aberglaslyn is the country house of Tan-yr-allt, where he lived, and where the poet Shelley for a short time in his sanguine youth lived with him, assisting with enthusiasm in a work he regarded as a monument of philanthropy. It was so in a sense, as it rescued many thousand acres from the sea at a loss to their rescuer of all or most of his fortune. Shelley's part was chiefly, I think, writing letters and stirring up public interest in the undertaking—for it was in that curious rambling period with his hapless first wife, beginning with Cwm-Elan, now submerged by the Birmingham lakes.

All Shelley lovers are familiar with this strange and happy-go-lucky itinerary. Fascinated by the charms of Cwm-Elan and Nant-Gwillt, he wanted to settle there for life as a sheep farmer. But the landlord was churlish enough to reject a poet, with no security or farming experience, as a tenant. Then it was Lynton and Godwin—where he was regarded as a Bolshevist, to use a modern term. Next came a longer stay, here at Tan-yr-allt, where he made himself quite useful regarding the draining of the Traeth from an altruistic point of view. A small obelisk since erected to the poet's memory stands upon the lawn. But the farmers did not like him at all, as he carried a pistol around, and if he saw a sheep on the mountains suffering from maggot or other ills that, though distressing, are not incurable, he used to shoot it off-hand. No doubt this tender-hearted, strange-looking, if beautiful youth was regarded as half-mad if not entirely so by the locals, when the midnight pistol-shooting and so-called attempted murder occurred which frightened Shelley and his family at top speed out of Tan-yr-allt the next morning—the "mystery" with which all Shelleyites are familiar. There is little doubt but that it was a rude practical joke of some young farmers, who in Mr. Maddox's absence wanted to take it out of him. Thence he and his shifted quarters to Keswick, where the kind-hearted but practical Southey, it will be remembered, did his best for the very unpractical and impecunious young genius.

The view of the Snowdon mountains on approaching this gateway into their inner recesses from the Traethmawr is magnificent, as they rear their full height here from the green levels of the Traeth. A long procession of giants confronting one, from the two Moel Winns, the fawr and fawch, on the right hand, by Cynicht, the "Matterhorn of Wales", presenting from here its sharp conical shape. Thence by the Craig-y-Llan, to the many heads of Snowdon crowned by the incomparable Wyddfa. And so round to Moel Hebog (the mountain of the hawk), whose long flanking ridge, though bearing various names, bounds the Traeth upon its northern side right up to Tremadoc and beyond it.

The pass of Aberglaslyn, as needs no saying, is one of the more notable of Welsh scenes: moreover, it divides the counties of Merioneth and Carnarvon. I entered it on this occasion in, to me, quite novel fashion. The little narrow-gauge line cut into its steeps and precipices, pushes its slow and precarious seeming way through or over woody defiles, with which the oldest travellers by normal methods of entry have never made acquaintance. Interesting and indeed charming as are these hitherto virgin ways as seen at all sorts of strange angles, it is perhaps well not to let the imagination harp too much on what would happen if a bolt slipped or a rail got misplaced, but better far to recall the fact that nothing untoward ever has happened on any of these Welsh toy railroads. But the high-road, after all, is the best entry into the pass, which is marked by the Pont Aberglaslyn. This ivy-covered bridge of a single arch swung across the torrent, here churning in a deep gorge, is ancient enough to go back into the times when the country people really did think that the Devil had built it for their ancestors on condition that he should have the first of them to cross it. They avoided this terrible toll, says the legend, by giving precedence to a dog at the opening ceremony!

There is but just space in this deep defile for road and stream to struggle through. Its mountain walls rise precipitous on either hand for some 800 or 900 feet, though pine trees contrive to cling in fair abundance to both sides. It is regarded as the most completely Alpine scene in Wales—naked rock, pine trees, and torrent. It really might be in Switzerland, or even in the Canadian Rockies, if that be a merit, which, as knowing them, I am inclined to question. There is scarcely a touch of that softness and colour which generally gives charm and contrasts to the wildest Welsh river scenery, as at the Devil's Bridge, for example, where the Reidol makes a longer and stormier passage through pathless gorges, of which later. Still the Aberglaslyn Pass is not a little awe-inspiring, as becomes a gateway into the heart of the Snowdon mountains. If Giraldus had brought his Archbishop through here on his recruiting tour for the Crusades, one might fancy he had it in his mind when he wrote " the land of Conan (Snowdonia) is the rudest and roughest district of all Wales. The ridges of its mountains are very high and narrow, terminating in sharp peaks, and so irregularly jumbled together that if the shepherds disputing with one another from their summits should agree to meet, they could scarcely effect their purpose in a whole day."

But Giraldus avoided the perpendicular as much as possible in this immortal tour. It may be remembered that having to lead their horses up one ascent near Carnarvon, the Archbishop, sitting down on a fallen tree to get his breath, playfully called upon the panting company of monks to whistle him a tune. " Nevertheless ", says Giraldus, " I must not pass over in silence the mountains—called by the Welsh Eryri and by the English Snowdon—which gradually increasing from the land of the sons of Conan and extending themselves northwards to near Deganwy seem to rear their lofty summits even to the clouds. They are said to be of such great extent that, according to an ancient proverb, ' As Mona could supply corn for all the inhabitants of Wales, so could the mountains of Eryri afford sufficient pasture for all the herds if collected together '. Hence these lines of Virgil may be applied to them :

" Et quantum longis carpent armenta diebus
Exigua tantum gelidus ros nocte reponet ".

On standing at the Pont Aberglasglyn a day or two after traversing the pass in the novel fashion alluded to, I recognized in a moment the wonderful green tint in the lambent waters of the stream at this point that used to strike me years ago, as I fancy it must strike every one at the first sight. Half a mile up, the gorge begins to open out into the lovely hollow where nestles the far-famed village of Beddgelert—the grave of Kelert, who alas! was not a faithful thirteenth-century hound, but a sixth-century saint.

Bettws-y-coed, Llangollen, Dolgelly, or Beddgelert, which of these four is most worthy of precedence is an occasional subject of friendly discussion among lovers of Wales. For myself, I would say Beddgelert, for the simple fact that the bosky feet of Snowdon rest on its village street, and there is nothing quite like Snowdon, even in the Scottish Highlands say many, neither Scotsmen nor Welshmen, and qualified to judge, though its actual height is exceeded. Despite its fame and the number of tourists who pass through it and incidentally visit Gelert's grave, which I hate to remember was the brilliant and lucrative invention of a hotel-keeper in the long ago—the village is exactly as it was thirty years ago when I first set eyes on it. Just one house, to be precise, appears to have been added since those quiet days. In truth, as a village it is altogether free of offence. A good deal of it is actually old, but open to the air and sky, not pinched up and squalid as are the ancient quarters of some villages and little towns in North Wales. Moreover, two beautiful streams are all over it as it were. The Colwyn comes sparkling out of woodland glades to divide its principal street, and an old stone bridge across it is the very heart of the place, where dawdlers find constant fascination in contemplating the changing humours of a mountain stream or watching trout. And then there is the great heaving pool under the farther bridge over the Glaslyn, where the rivers run together, and the sewin and even salmon fresh from the sea can be often spotted lying in the deep crystal water. Two or three rather old-fashioned hotels look down upon these central scenes, while the old "Goat" still stands in dignified aloofness on the highway just before you enter the village, with its stately trees grouped around it. Across the road are its pretty grounds leading out into the fair meadow in whose midst, towards the bosky trail of the Glaslyn River, a clump of trees marks the slab of stone over which thousands of passing travellers drop the tributary tear to the Welsh prince's faithful hound.

Borrow walked down here from Carnarvon by the Rhyd-ddu Pass, and spent the night at the "Goat". The guests, one assumes, treated him with disrespect. They were people of more or less social pretensions, quite unwarranted according to him. Perhaps he catechized them as he did his peasants. At any rate he devotes the whole of a short chapter to their devastation, particularly "a short, spuddy fellow with an ugly face", who affected military airs, and "a cadaverous Scotsman of five feet three whose fingers were covered with tawdry rings". Evidently there had been a row! He was in a bad temper the next morning, for at the cottage by Aberglaslyn Bridge, still standing, there was a notice-board over the door. He approached it, expecting to find "good ale was sold within". But the inspection only roused his wrath: "Tea made here, the cup that cheers but not inebriates". He was turning away with a wry face when a woman appeared at the door and said in good English: "'The bill of fare does not tempt you, sir.' 'It does not,' said I, 'and you might be ashamed of yourself to have nothing better to offer a traveller than a cup of tea.'" The woman explained that it was the magistrate's fault, who refused her a licence. After a little entertaining Borrovian by-play, the woman indicated that she had *something* better than tea, and taking him inside, put a bottle and tumbler on the table. Borrow tasted it, and it nearly knocked him down, but with the aid of some water he swallowed the dose and apparently felt better. His moral was: "Those who wish brandy or whisky far above proof should always go to a temperance house". However, he gave "the temperance woman" a handsome honorarium, and departed for Festiniog, after one last glance at the valley. "Truly the Valley of Gelert is a wondrous valley, rivalling for grandeur and beauty any vale either in the Alps or Pyrenees. Anything lovelier than this spot it would be difficult to conceive." But Wales in truth resembles none of these Alpine countries. It is a land unto itself, except for the English lake country, which, though lacking a Snowdon, has larger lakes to its credit, yet bears in essentials a very close resemblance. It fell to me many years ago to traverse both these regions with that prince of black-and-white artists, Mr. Joseph Pennell, who had never seen either before, and was vastly impressed and surprised. He was very emphatic, I remember, in his preference for North Wales, too much so, I thought.

I am inclined to think that forty or fifty years ago people knew their own country, in the sense that counts for knowledge, better than they do now, though to be sure they did not go abroad so much. The Welsh mountains, off the roads, seemed to be now almost deserted, and here I was in the very heart of things! But all day long cars of every size and motor-cycles went tearing and roaring by my inn door, mostly as if the devil were behind them. Yet the village in the mornings and evenings was its old peaceful self. Very few people were staying in it. Six or eight only in my hotel, yet it is the best of centres for walking, as it was of old for driving or cycling. The char-à-bancs, whose patrons I should fancy must get a better idea of the country than most of the other road-travellers, turn out their loads to lunch and tea, so that howsoever snug you may be at other moments, it is well to be over the hills and far away at those palpitating hours—though the demeanour of all these invaders, so far as I witnessed it, was irreproachable.

Three valleys meet at Beddgelert—that of the Aberglaslyn Pass towards which the river winds through woody meadows in rapids and crystal green salmon pools. Then there is the upper part of this same Glaslyn valley, which at a different angle comes down from the high breast of Snowdon through four lakes. Lastly, the valley of the Colwyn, which stream in its short course from the Rhyd-ddu Pass, where the grassy feet of Hebog and Snowdon meet, comes bearing the waters of a dozen mountain brooks. And parting these valleys the great mountains rise up almost sheer. Hebog fills the whole west with its craggy and rugged crown, and its long extending ridges scarcely lower, looking more from this side than its 2600 feet. South of the village the Craig-y-Llan, whose farther end forms the southern precipice of the Aberglaslyn Pass, shoots up straight for half its height, a mass of fern-clad boulders, and then rolls away to back-lying grassy summits which look southward over ranges of mountains, among which Cynicht is in the foreground and Cader Idris looming large on the horizon. With the memory of having skipped up here, in more active days, during a passing halt in the village, a fine evening tempted me to repeat the adventure, as it faced my inn door not half a mile distant. It was not till I had scrambled up some 600 feet of rugged boulders buried in bracken and arrived at the gate on to the open moor heading for the mountain-top, in a parlous state of exhaustion, that it was revealed to me that my facile ascent of a former day had been achieved from another and infinitely easier angle. Memory pays one curious tricks !

I got a pennyworth of mild amusement, however, out of my unnecessary toil, for I happened to mention, without any sinister purpose, to an elderly stranger at dinner, that I had just been up the Craig-y-Llan, and pointed out from the window the face of the preliminary climb which appears at that distance but a smooth sheet of fern hung like a curtain from the sky-line. Next evening, again a tempting one, I was sitting in the porch enjoying the beauty of the scene. The motor traffic had all cleared off, and the tranquillity of olden days was upon the village. The low of cows coming to the milk-pail, the bleat of sheep on the lower slopes of Hebog, the bark of collie dogs, the murmur of many waters close at hand.

Facing my laborious trail of the preceding day, I caught sight of a figure hovering about its base, and applying my glasses easily recognized the little elderly man, my table neighbour. His ambitions were obvious, for he was already a few yards up. By the rate of his subsequent progress over the exasperating litter of hidden rocks, I could see that he was a tortured man and felt that his heart was heavy towards myself. I watched his unsteady, halting, labouring way with interest and sympathy for quite a long time. About a quarter of the way up, he came to a standstill and sat down—and that was the end. I chose to fancy him worrying a little about advancing years and that sort of thing. If he had only known how I felt when I got to the top, it would have cheered him a bit. I watched him down, as the descent, from a sprained-ankle point of view, to put it mildly, was much more precarious than the upward toil. However, he had never reached the worst. We dined together as usual, and he unburdened his soul, and was moreover strictly veracious as to the modest altitude he had achieved. Nor did he know I had been looking at him!

The plain little church of Pointed style, outside the village in the meadow, though containing some of its ancient walls, is mostly a restoration, but has a curious old font of black stone. The Welsh service on Sunday seemed to be well attended, particularly as there is also one in English. For where the Welsh are bi-lingual—usually the case in large, frequented villages and in all towns—many may attend the English service for various reasons. This church is a relic of an Augustine priory said to be the oldest monastic foundation, save Bardsey, in Wales. An adjoining piece of ground is still known as Dol-y-Llein, or the meadow of the nun. The Cistercians, however, those busy sheep farmers, seem to have encroached a good deal on the Augustines in the thirteenth century, and got grants of land from the princes that covered the whole Vale of Gwynant and reached up to the peak of Snowdon. Gelert or no Gelert, it is quite certain that Llewelyn the Great and Llewelyn the Last, from their chief seat of Aberffraw in Angelsey, were often over here hunting, though in any case Beddgelert, remote as it seems, was on a fairly frequented highway. There was also a royal salmon weir here which the Kings of England ultimately annexed. In coupling these two Llewelyns together, though a reign and a generation parted grandsire and grandson, one cannot forget how differently Fate dealt with them. The first, all powerful and successful for so long throughout Wales and even a deciding factor in the Barons' wars of Henry III; the last, though designated Prince of North Wales and Lord of Snowdon, reduced to the lordship of little more than Anglesey and the present Carnarvonshire!

I was lucky in a congenial companion for my fortnight in the Snowdon mountains. Cadwallader was an unusual example of a crag climber, who took an interest in the world below from the point of view in which it appealed to me. He was also a Welshman. I hasten to disclaim for myself any share in his first taste, as these Welsh and other acrobats practise it, even if youth were not an imperative asset. But even with that, I confess to having always preferred, the backstairs, let us say, up a mountain, and for choice to go up them alone. Cadwallader prefers the outside wall, with his fingers and toes in the cracks between the bricks. I admire this spirit in the abstract immensely. Its daring surpasses that required in almost any other pastime, while the achievement has to be its own reward. There are no shouting crowds nor even a newspaper paragraph—unless an obituary one! Yet it has an amazing fascination for its votaries, though it may not appeal to the mood in which some of us like to ascend a mountain. But Cadwallader's crag-climbing enterprises fitted in very well with my less sensational ventures. As he had a car, it was occasionally my privilege to drive with him and his fellow-experts to the point where they were going to fling themselves on some mountain face, and then, with lunch in my pocket, to ramble at leisure about the lower heights or by the tarns till their return at evening. On other days Cadwallader and I roamed Carnarvonshire far and wide in his little car, and in a strange atmosphere of storm and sunshine, renewing acquaintance in my case with many an old familiar scene.

It was a fair day—and one that remained fair, which was more to the point—that I went with the climbers to Llyn Ogwen and the foot of Tryfan, which they were going to tackle (on the wrong side, of course), preparatory to an ordinary scramble over the Glydyrs. Now the road up the Glaslyn valley from Beddgelert to Capel Curig, where is the turn up to Llyn Ogwen and the pass of Nant Francon, is for its first half regarded by many as the most exquisite thing of its kind in Wales. For some four miles the road hugs the foot of Aran, the long, southern flank and nobly upstanding buttress of Snowdon, from which radiate downwards little valleys and gorges, rocky brows, bosky glens purple with foxgloves, spouting rills, and sheeny curtains of fern. The lofty insulate rock of Dinas Emrys rises on the left of the road, carrying on its summit some rude remains that tell a famous legendary tale. Vortigern retired here to hide his shame after his betrayal by his Saxon friends, so the chroniclers say, before his last retreat to Nant Gwrth-eyrn, in Lleyn, to find there his grave. On leaving it, he gave the place to Merlin Ambrosius, his particular soothsayer. Many legends gather round the spot, and it has been called Dinas Emrys—the last a corruption of Ambrosius—from that day to this.

The Glaslyn, which has bordered the road ever since leaving Beddgelert, playing hide-and-seek with it in woods of oak and ash, now loses itself in Llyn Dinas, which for half a mile or so laps against the drooping willows and alders that skirt our winding way. But it is some three miles on, still following the clear, turbulent stream through more oak woods and thence into the open, that the perfect beauty of Nant Gwynant is achieved. For here is that bewitching lake, Llyn Gwynant, with its meadowy shores and fringing woods, sleeping beneath the very feet of Snowdon, which rises behind it in all its massive grandeur, the Wyddfa showing plainly at the apex of these great converging bastions. Our road begins rapidly to climb on leaving the lake head, and gives a fine view of the cataracts of the Glaslyn as in a white streak of successive falls, 250 feet high, they come down Cwm Dyli from their two frigid natal lakes hidden away up in the lap of Snowdon.

From the top of the high pass, where the road through that of Llanberis branches away to the left, there is a superb backward view down the Vale of Gwynant, with the narrow lake shining in its green trough ; woods, homesteads, and embowered country houses lying back along its southern shore, while the infant Glaslyn sparkles down meadowy strips towards it from the foot of its high cascades. The old road, too, is still there, trailing down the glen towards the lake shore. But this upper one, which in admirable gradients has climbed 1000 feet, is at least eighty years old. This meeting-place of three roads is almost a classical spot in the history of touring and mountaineering in North Wales. In old days it was known as Gorphwysfa, or the "resting-place"—a name still retained by one of the two inns. It has the finest command of Snowdon at close quarters and of many of the passes.

Here, too, stands the famous hostelry of Pen-y-gwryd, whose visitors' book treasures many effusions in verse and prose by well-known people, pre-eminently some humorous stanzas by Charles Kingsley and Tom Hughes, who used to come here together for climbing and fishing. But above all it is a popular centre for the Climbing Club, and here their records and publications are kept. More than one bold climber has left it in the morning never to return alive. It stands nearly 1000 feet above sea-level, and in its wild and open way is one of the most alluring haunts in North Wales. For two or more generations it was in the hands of one of those inn-keeping families, notable throughout Wales, who understood the art of making themselves and their houses popular with their guests. Yet after all one would not think this was so difficult !—the social side of it at any rate—and what an asset it is, but how rare ! The average Boniface in an English hotel and in many of the modern type in Wales seems to think that bad manners, or it would be fairer to say a lack of manners and personal interest in his guests, the correct attitude ; and the Scots are even worse. A training in Switzerland would be an admirable thing for the future prosperity of these gauche amateurs and, above all, for the comfort of their guests.

The three or four miles of undulating road down the bare valley of the Gwryd to Capel Curig hugs the lower and southern edges of the Glydyrs. More interesting, however, is the outlook southwards across the boggy valley, its tumbling brook and sloping moors. For here, Moel Siabod (2860 feet), the chief outlier of the Snowdon group, fills the sky. It hardly shows to the best advantage from this side, exhibiting its wilder and more shapely outline to travellers in the Lledr valley above Bettws-y-coed. I have already alluded to the climatic rigours with which our British mountains, for all their modest altitude, can overwhelm unwary travellers. It is not easy for those with no experience, or only a fair weather one, of these engaging hills to realize that they can put up storms which many otherwise healthy men could not face for any length of time and live. It is the commonest thing, for example, when a mountain fox-hunt is caught on the high fells of Cumberland by one of these storms, for one or more of the rough-coated terriers to perish in their tracks. When possible they are lifted and carried by their masters, who for their own sakes make for the low ground at best pace, whatever hounds are doing. I have known more than one instance of these little dogs actually dying in their master's arms. Foxhounds are not thus affected. I very nearly succumbed myself in a blinding blizzard in October, when alone on a northern fell many years ago.

I had so nearly dropped that I can write of the experience as a person who has been nearly drowned can, and readily imagine the completed process, save that this other one is painless. This digression may be perhaps condoned as leading up to the strange fact that about a dozen years ago a middle-aged father with a son in his twenties ascending Moel Siabod in September, got benighted by a mist on the mountains and were both found dead from exposure in the morning. The case of the elder victim would not have been worth recalling, but as regards the son, a healthy young man, no better example could be cited, for this was in September, the summer season!

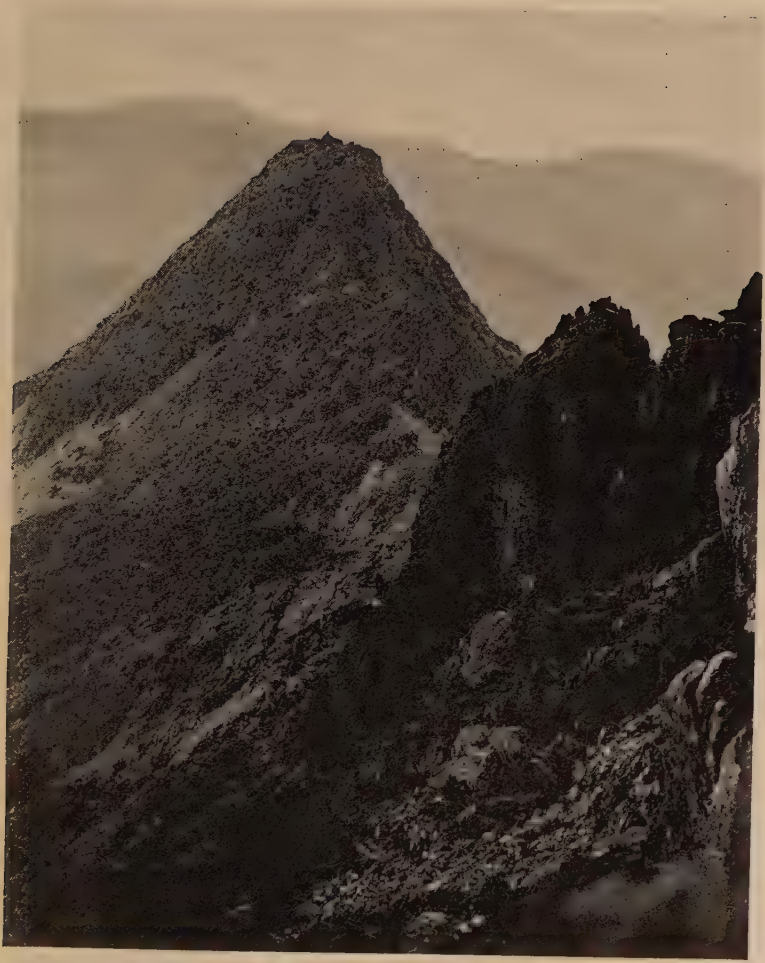
Our road skirts them and the Gwryd ceases from troubling in the two pretty little lakes at Capel Curig, which last place of famous name is represented by the "Royal Hotel", a few cottages, an ancient, disused little church and its modern successor. In this wide, open, treeless, mountain-girt, and moorland country, the great hotel, its gauntness mitigated by a grove of trees, may be accorded a touch of historic interest as it was about the first erected in the early days of Welsh touring in the eighteenth century, and subsequently added to. It stood, moreover, on the old Holyhead road before Telford remade it. Bingley, who came here on a walking tour from Cambridge in 1798, found it "a commodious inn," with boats on the adjacent lakes for its guests. These people were the first generation to discover that mountains were things of beauty, and ventured to walk up them on two legs with a stick and not go down on all-fours and shout for help like their Cockney fathers, Defoe among them, had done when they struck a slope at an angle of 25 degrees. Even these later writers, the first patrons of Bettws-y-coed and Capel Curig, freely mingle their admiration of the grandeur of these novel scenes with the terrors, tremblings, and quakings they inspire should "a foot slip"—

by which they really meant a quite superfluous jump to right or left. I wonder what they would say to the achievements of Cadwallader and his friends! Just before the Holyhead road was engineered, the "Ancient Briton", the only coach that ventured then to face these mountain roads, used to stop overnight here and then take fourteen hours to reach Holyhead! But Capel Curig has deeper roots in the past than its famous old hotel, namely, in St. Curig himself, who first settled on the Upper Wye at Llan Gurig, in whose honour the ancient little church was founded. His image was quite a popular fake in the Middle Ages, according to an old Welsh poem:

> "A certain friar to increase his store
> Beneath his cloak grey Curig's image bore."

Nor must I forget that looking back from here, up the way we came, there is a particularly fine distant view of Snowdon.

Turning here into the old Holyhead road and facing north, we were soon in the wide and treeless head of Nant Francon, the vale of beavers, a place of meadows, sheep pastures, stone walls, with here and there a grey stone homestead, and the infant waters of the Ogwen prattling by the roadside. Tryfan soon towered ahead of us, with its sharp insulated and rugged crown—over 3000 feet in height. The still loftier Glydyrs rose behind. The head of Llyn Ogwen gleamed a mile away in the contracted vale below. The great humpy backs of Carnedd Dafydd and Llewelyn, ranking next in height to Snowdon, rose above its eastern shores, the only mountains in Wales that I can think of called after national heroes in authentic history. We turned off the road to a farmhouse at the foot of Tryfan, with which my companions were on terms, but it was locked up and deserted. As we had noticed a sheep-shearing at a neighbouring farm, the explanation seemed fairly obvious. However, there was plenty of shelter in the big barn for the two little cars, and my friends having stripped themselves of their wraps and something more for their assault on Tryfan, we parted, to meet by appointment for tea at the farmhouse, without taking sufficient account, as it turned out, of the sheep-shearing.



TRYFAN AND CARNEDD LLEWELYN

ECHANICS' ★ R

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAINS

TRYFAN is a gigantic crag, of stratified rock, slanting upwards in layers and notching the sky-line with their rugged ends. Pennant saw in its outline " a human face reclining backwards, forehead, nose, lips, and chin, and without any great strain of fancy a beard may be added ", completing to that invaluable old traveller's satisfaction the suggestion of an Arch-druid. However, the three most prominent of these rugged excrescences have given the mountain its name, which signifies " the three peaks ". The day was clear though sunless; not leaden, but merely grey, with a light air stirring—to my taste a tone more in harmony than sunshine with the awesome nature of the surroundings, and the chaotic litter of rock and crag that piled itself high to heaven on every side.

From the farm I walked down the valley to the head of the lake, and thence along the waterside road cut in the mountain foot by Telford, away back in the old coaching days, and that still carries the traffic along its western shore. A sombre lake in truth is this of Ogwen, and a mile or more in length. And this may well be, seeing that some of the loftiest mountains in Wales shoot straight up from its indented rocky shores. Carnedd Dafydd, with its fellow-giant Llewelyn half-hidden behind it, but a hundred feet or so lower than Snowdon itself, rises from the farther side of the lake—a stupendous wall, unbroken by ravines or buttresses, and with just slope enough to hold the wild litter of rocks in place till the screes end in a belt of cliff that supports its smooth crown. On the near side, the Glydyrs, fawr and fach, both over 3000 feet, loom up behind Tryfan, a perfect welter of rock and crag, filling the whole tortured surface between the heights. As in the Llanberis Pass, one has a sort of feeling that it would not take much to set this huge company of giants, these thousands of detached crags and boulders, all toppling down with a wild roar into the lake. However, they showed no inclination on this occasion to break the habit of a thousand—of ten thousand years.

All was still and solemn as ever, save for the bleat of sheep on the hill and the waters of the lake ruffled by a smart breeze breaking on the rocks beneath the road. Ahead and across the foot of the lake, as if to block all egress, rose with clear-cut outline the mountain heights of Y Garn and Foel Goch. Now and again, to be sure, the silence was rudely broken by the hoot of a motor rounding the bends of this shore-road, and tearing through this majestic scene as if it were the Portsmouth Road at Ripley. What a shock this grim and lonesome pass must have given to many a Cockney traveller bound for Dublin in the old coaching days, or again to country-folk from East Anglia, or Kent, or Sussex. Not so much, perhaps, to the tourists who came to see the mountains, for they were expecting great and strange things, but the ordinary through-travellers on their first journey, who probably had no expectations at all and had never seen anything bigger and bolder than Box Hill or the Brighton Downs, or a torrent of any sort, in their lives.

Where the lake narrows before its outflow, I watched a couple of anglers at work, and was lucky enough to see one of them land a really nice trout for these mountain waters. The little inn at this end of the lake seemed to have expanded somewhat from the modest, two-bedroom, thirty-shillings-a-week sort of snuggery that I remembered. I turned up the rocky path behind it and set my face towards Llyn Idwal, but a short mile up the course of a brook which comes leaping down from it over rough pastures. This has the reputation of being the wildest and eeriest lake in the Principality. I think it is all that—with perhaps one exception. Ogwen is sombre enough, but it is open at both ends. Idwal, more or less pear-shaped, with the stem on the side of approach, fills as it were the bottom of a deep crater, three parts of it overhung by some of the sternest and loftiest mountain walls in Wales. Tryfan, the Glydyr-fawr, and the Garn all dip their feet in it, and when the winds are still, as they had been when I was up here last, throw as savage a tumult of rocks and crags upon its mirror'd surface as imagination could desire. It is the fitting scene, too, of a dark tragedy, from which in fact it gets its name. For Idwal, a son of Owain Gwynedd, the illustrious warrior Prince of North Wales and much more besides, was here murdered by Dunawt ap Nefydd Hardd, one of the five barons who held the forest of Snowdon under the Prince. Idwal had been put out to fosterage after the custom of that day—a custom, by the way, that was infinitely mischievous in provoking internecine wars. For the brothers who in Wales were for ever disputing with one another their inheritance, were each and all backed and encouraged by their whole fosterage connexion. The foster-father of Owain Gwynedd's poet-warrior son Hywell, already encountered on these pages, was one of another sort to the treacherous Dunawt. For when Hywell fell fighting against his brother in the usual territorial dispute, seven of his foster-brothers died by his side.

> "The sons of Cadifor, a noble band of brothers,
> In the hollow above Pentraeth
> Were full of daring and high purpose,
> They were cut down beside their foster-brother."

A fatality seems to have attended the sons of Owain Gwynedd, for two of them, mere boys, had been brutally blinded by Henry II among the twenty-four hostages he held for the peace of Wales, and mutilated.

In Pennant's time the shepherds held this lake to be the haunt of demons and that no bird would fly across its damned waters. This tradition, as such, is still cherished. Its "damned waters" were rippling in a light breeze as I strolled along the rock-strewn, lonely shore. Though the sun couldn't quite get through, it was a clear and buoyant day. Every rock and gulley, cliff and ravine, on Tryfan and the Glydyrs, gave out their grim secrets, while the precipitous brow and shoulders of the Garn opposed to them across the lake a scarcely less savage front. I was sorely tempted to climb Tryfan by the ordinary ascent which is from this side. I had seen my friends already against the sky-line on its jagged pinnacles, but by this time they were doubtless away over the Glydyrs. But remembering the walk back to the farm, I chose the more ignoble though more profitable part and climbed part way up the northern slopes of Garn, which opened out the valley of the Ogwen, the Menai Straits, and Anglesey, though truly I most of all enjoyed the lonely shores of Idwal and its incomparable surroundings.

I had not the lake quite to myself, however, for an elderly gentleman was fishing with a young rustic Welshman as guide and gillie, quite after the good old leisurely manner. He proved to be an English tourist stopping somewhere out Bangor way. The trout were not rising as they should have been on such a propitious day, but it was easy to see that the angler was not breaking his heart about that. The boy, who was about eighteen, was fishing, his employer seated on a rock looking on, or perhaps looking up. He was quite right, for, as I soon discovered, his young guide was an expert, tied his own flies, had his home in a farmhouse in Nant Francom, and as an angler, knew every tarn and stream in the mountains. If he couldn't make the fish rise, it was quite certain the elderly gentleman could not. In truth, he was better employed than in such fruitless effort. For he had never been up here before, and was evidently a man of taste and feeling, and quite taken unawares by the majesty of the scene into which he had almost fortuitously stumbled in pursuit of a day's fishing. We ate our sandwiches and smoked our pipes together on the only bit of grassy margin which the "damned waters of Idwal" lave. He was a Londoner and a considerable traveller, except in his own country, of which, like most people, he didn't know very much. He had never been in Wales before, never thought of it apparently! He had been borne on the wings of holiday convention to Dartmoor, and had a vague notion that Wales was a slightly glorified edition of it. He was now enjoying one of the surprises of his life—and well he may have been. I don't think he gave a thought to his empty basket, and to tell the truth, on handling his wobbly, top-heavy rod, I could guess that empty creels were no new things!

LLYN IDWAL

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The rocks here, as in many other parts of Wales, are covered with glacier scorings not so easy of recognition to a layman. In fact, the whole of this valley was once a great glacier and the green rock-strewn knolls that cover the space between the foot of Idwal and the outflow of the Ogwen are, according to geologists, old moraines. Taliesin in the sixth century sings of the "warriors of the island of Britain", whose graves lie amid the litter and chaos on the summit of these awesome heights, on Tryfan, on the Glydyrs, and above the huge precipice under Castell-y-Geifr, the "fortress of the goats". This is an engaging dream when in their solemn company.

I found time to descend the Ogwen valley below the lake, just far enough to revisit the fine display of cascade and rapid by which the river tumbles down into the green vale below. After passing the dreadful chaos of the Bethesda slate quarries, some miles on, the Ogwen becomes once more rural and sylvan, till it seeks the sea through the parks and woods of Penrhyn Castle. Most imposing, too, are the heights that overhang this egress of the Ogwen from its lake. The northerly bastion of Carnedd Dafydd forms a magnificent peak of over 3000 feet upon the right, while a string of shapely heights across the valley, but little lower, reach almost to Bethesda. As I walked back after some hours' enjoyment of these inspiring scenes along the lake-shore road to meet my companions at the farm, I encountered the shade of George Borrow; who, after a midday dinner at Capel Curig, had walked through here on an August afternoon to Bangor. The hotel at the former place had been much too swell for his liking. He had dined in the grand saloon amid much fashionable company, which he chose to think regarded his heated appearance and dusty boots with supercilious disdain as evidence of his inability to pay for a carriage. Probably they had no such thoughts, if any thoughts at all, regarding him, but he liked to tilt at windmills. His afternoon walk through the finest pass in Wales seems to have been entirely absent-minded: if he hadn't told us it was a broiling hot day, I should have supposed it was a wet one. He catechizes two peasant children in a cabin, who bring him a drink of water, as to the labours of their absent parents and themselves, for a full page of print. They tell him in Welsh they have had the ague and that all their neighbours had it.

We must suppose that for once his Welsh failed him, and that some other epidemic more probable on a British mountainside a thousand feet above sea-level was intended. Tryfan appeared to Borrow as merely " a humpy hill with a precipice on one side ". Llewelyn and Dafydd were merely " some high hills on his right ". He passed a lake, the name of which he was told was Ogwen. Of Idwal, its weird allure and its tragedy, he was unconscious. He passed down by the falls of the Ogwen too without a word, though associated so closely with the famous bard Gwalchmai of Owen Glyndwr's day. What was the matter with the old man? The fact is that a carpenter in corduroy trousers and a blue coat joined him on the road from the very house I was now making for. As they went at it hammer and tongs, the amazement and delight of the Welshman at finding a Sais who could talk Welsh—it would be something, he declared, to talk about for the rest of his life—proved the sure talisman to Borrow's flow of eloquence. One must therefore attribute to this rustic carpenter's admiring and engrossing converse the miss that his companion made of these inspiring scenes. Somewhere on the road below, he informed Borrow that the vale (Nant Francon) was Nant-yr-cenane-gwn, " the pass of the young dogs ", because, when shouted at, it responded with a noise resembling the cry of hounds. Whereupon the carpenter shouted " taw! taw! " and the obedient echoes gave back to Borrow's ears the sound of a pack in full cry. At every cottage they passed, when nearing Bethesda, the carpenter went to the door and called out: " I am with a Sais who can speak Cumraeg ". Naturally, at the first public-house they came to, Borrow invited his friend to come in and drink some ale. But the man refused, and to the astonished traveller briefly stated that he was a teetotaller. Though, of course, disappointed, as it meant parting, Borrow grasped him heartily by the hand. He had never before met a teetotaller, he declared, who didn't try to make a parade of his profession.

When I arrived at the farm it was still shut up, nor was there any sign of my friends, and the cars were still standing in the barn. So I went back to the gate on the high road where Borrow and the carpenter had first foregathered, sat down on a low wall, and looked across the narrow, grassy valley of the upper Ogwen brook to the less imposing heights that stretched south-eastwards from the shoulder of Carnedd Dafydd towards the Lugwy valley. Behind these piled-up outworks lay the great block of mountainous upland that one comes up into from Trefriew, Llanrwst, and the Conway valley, and in whose heart lie embedded the long lakes of Crafnant and the birthplace of Taliesin. I was recalling old days of pilgrimage up and down the Conway valley, thinking of Gwydyr Castle, reduced since then to ashes, and that great old Tudor Welshman, Sir John Wynne of Gwydir, who tells us so much and all so quaintly of sixteenth-century Wales, when a shout broke upon my dreams, announcing the return of the others. The farmhouse-tea, part of our day's programme, seemed now obviously cut out of it.

But these people knew all the farmers about, and having earned a keener appetite than I, were not to be denied. So we were very soon into the cars and almost as soon at the farmhouse a mile away, where all the few men of the valley were hard at work sheep-shearing. There was quite a lively scene and cheery uproar in the paddock, to which sheep and dogs and children contributed, each apparently with all their might. The women of the house, too, were presumably at such a moment on the stretch, and our advent untimely. But H—— uttered some magic words or other, and they set about getting us an excellent tea in the big, old-fashioned kitchen-living-room, with as much good humour as if it were a slack day and they had nothing else to do. Yet all these hungry friends in the shearing-yard would, we understood, descend on them later in force. And the days when a Welsh farmhouse supper consisted of oatcake and buttermilk, fermity and cawl and potatoes, have passed away, certainly in such farms as these. H—— knows them all. He lives in the country, and has been up Snowdon exactly 364 times. He is waiting to get level with the days in the year, he says, till his son is old enough to go up with him. Nor need I add that his usual method of attacking the King of

Mountains is not by the little railway from Llanberis! But this, of course, is the pastime of leisure hours. In others he is a landscape painter, the only artist, I think, now living in the Beddgelert neighbourhood—lucky but wise man. His house, studio, and garden abut on the most romantic bit of the Colwyn, where its pellucid waters sport among mossy rocks under the wildwood shade. However, he is well enough known to the buyers of pictures in the big northern cities, who, I am told, generally buy what they like and not what they are told to buy by the latest crank, after the fashion of Londoners. These northerners apparently still preserve a queer fancy for hanging reminders of romantic and uplifting scenes upon their walls. The landscape painter, who lived the seasons through with nature in its noblest forms, seems scarce in the land nowadays. Save for the Cornish Marine School, who might be recommended to cast their eyes on the coasts of Pembroke for a change, they seem nearly all to have taken covert in bricks and mortar in Chelsea and Hampstead. Hence the "Surrey Common" and the "Sussex Farmhouse" with which the catalogues bristle nowadays, as evidence of their limitations both in enterprise and subject.

A day or two later the same party, with one addition to bear me company in the middle altitudes, drove up to Pen-y-Gwryd and on to the Gorphwysfa Hotel, just beyond it, at the head of the Llanberis Pass. This is a well-known starting-point both for the ordinary walking path up Snowdon from this side and for the rather more adventurous route along the ridge of the Crib Goch. Our climbers were out for that, a mere trifle, of course, but to be followed by the ascent of the Wyddfa in some upside-down fashion, which does not matter here. They had nursed a design, I think, on Lliwedd, but had abandoned it for some reason. I was not sorry, as destined to be more or less under it all day. And for choice I should prefer admiring that grizzly precipice unembellished by any human figures, much less those of friends, clinging like flies to his face. I don't know how many times H—— has been up Lliwedd. I know that he did a sketch half-way up, getting the peak of Snowdon at an angle unknown to brush or camera, as I have seen it hanging in his studio. It is an easy trail to Llyn Llydaw, as it was a road to the mines formerly worked there. We soon parted company—our climbers for Crib Goch and we two for the higher lake of Glas Llyn under the peak of Snowdon, with the vague idea before us of scrambling up that last 1500 feet after lunch, if the heavens remained propitious.

But if the walk to Llyn Llydaw was easy, it enabled one better to enjoy the view to our left down into the deep Cwm, where the stream of the Glaslyn, after falling out of that lake, hurries downwards to the head of its big descent into Nant Gwynant. Above it and opposite us rose the flanking ridge of Lliwedd, trending down from the Wyddfa—which last, by the way, means "conspicuous"—to drop to the waters of Llyn Gwynant. Llyn Llydaw, for its position high up in the lap of Snowdon, is a fairly large and deep lake with a causeway across one of its bays. Its position is striking, its surroundings glorious, but in foreground detail it is most depressing. For the empty shells of miners' cottages are crumbling on its shore. Its once pleasant banks of turf and fern and crag are now smothered in masses of dump and vast heaps of slate-stone. Its deep, cold waters lap almost everywhere against these dreary embankments, the abandoned refuse of worked-out mines. On the farther shore, however, primitive nature still spreads a verdant strip. But immediately above it rises the terrible grim precipice of Lliwedd, 800 feet of sheer hard rock which gives one almost to wonder where a climber can get in even the tips of his fingers or the toes of his boots. In the little book published by and for the select and noble band who disport themselves upon its ghastly surface and others like it, I read that there are seven or eight different routes up it, each with its particular name. There would be only one route down it, that is quite certain, if your hold slipped! Lives have been lost here, of course, and wonderful tales are told of narrow escapes.

From Llyn Llydaw up to Glaslyn is a much steeper trail, which lifts one another 500 feet, while the connecting stream plunges down below us with many a small cascade. Glaslyn is a smaller lake, as becomes one 2000 feet above sea-level. It is much less gruesome in itself than the other, and lies in the angle where the Crib Goch runs up against the actual precipice of Snowdon. It has not been tortured by miners, though in former days the ore used to be carried up from Llyn Llydaw and along its banks and right up to within 500 feet of the Wyddfa, on men's backs, and from there slithered down the long, smooth slopes to the Carnarvon road at Rhyd-ddu.

The day hitherto had been pleasant. It apparently remained so everywhere else. But when we got up to Glaslyn, in the full hope of eating our sandwiches in peace upon its banks and enjoying the majestic scenes which enclose it, we found ourselves in another climate. For it proved to be one of those classical " caves of the winds ", which we dealt with, perhaps rather frivolously, in a former chapter, but there was no fun in this one. Llyn Llydaw had been scarcely ruffled. We had looked far down into its icy and crystal clear depths. But there was a little tempest on up here, and it was as cold as Christmas. We had been looking forward to a peaceful and lazy hour. But there was no peace for the weary up here, though we wandered far and wide along the shore in search of it. We sought out crags that by every law of nature should have had a lee-side. But they hadn't, not any of them. The wind always hit both sides with equal sting. Apparently it went round and round the tarn in vain endeavours to escape, and the waves with it. It seemed a purely local affair, a literal tempest in a teapot, for our friends, who had taken the peak of Snowdon casually in their stride, reported it to have been almost quiet up there.

So we sat down in despair and let the blast do its worst, while we consumed our lunch moodily and shivered, for it was desperately cold. The Wyddfa above us looked close by, and the people on it, the train travellers from Llanberis, stood out plainly against the sky-line. The only pedestrian—the only walker I remember seeing on the mountains last summer—strode past us here and went up the steep, tortuous trail above the tarn which leads to the peak of Snowdon—the path of our good intentions which the rude blast had dissipated. His

THE PEAK OF SNOWDON AND LLYN GLASLYN

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costume, or lack of it, would have paralysed the mountaineers of all the pre-war periods—the men of knickerbockers, Norfolk jackets, and woollen stockings. They might well have taken him, had the atmosphere been favourable for goblins, for an ancient Briton, though actually I believe he was in the height of fashion and represented quite a common week-end object of the wayside on the Surrey hills and Sussex downs. He was a big, almost middle-aged man, and clad only in a brown shirt and running-drawers, with bare legs. A wallet hung from his shoulder, and, being bareheaded, his long hair streamed in the wind—in short, a sort of mammoth Boy Scout.

Whether it was sitting for so long in such close company with these stern, topmost crags of Snowdon, amid the howling of the wind, or the sight of this ancient Briton—from Chelsea—I thought a good deal on the way down of the last Llewellyn, his stormy life, his valiant deeds, his weak moments, his sad and romantic love and marriage—for we may, I think, concede this much—and his tragic death. For this lonely little lake and these aerial crags are surely the crown and innermost sanctuary of old Wales, the immemorial beacon that over land and sea has stood for such ages as the sign and seal of Welsh nationality and independence. For the "Lord of Snowdon" was something more than a mere second or courtesy title of the Princes of Gwynned. This land of Eryri was the citadel and last defence of North Wales, in a sense of all Wales, as was its keep to a Norman castle. No conquest was complete while this held out. The lesser in this case may be said to have included the greater, and the lord of this inner citadel, this national fortress, may well have held its lordship as no empty honour. The hapless Llewelyn, when half his own kingdom had been wrested from him and the grip that he had for the moment won upon all Wales "from the Taff to the farthest shores of Anglesey" severed, may, peradventure, have yet found some small comfort in it.

He was not, to be sure, so great a man as his grandfather, as he lacked the political insight of Llewelyn Fawr. But the times were harder on him. Many of his tributary chieftains had become hopelessly intermarried with the baronial families of the Marches. All his aunts and his own brother had formed such alliances. Yet more, at the critical moment he had no longer to face the weak Henry III but the greatest of English warrior kings and statesmen, and not like his father distracted by baronial wars. Still he put up a great fight, and then the love tragedy of his life, as we may fairly deem it, came in and put into the power of Edward to make him choose between his patriotism and his lady-love. For in a peaceful interlude, Llewelyn had met the beautiful daughter of Simon de Montfort at Kenilworth and become enamoured of her. In the meantime the lady had gone to reside in France with her father. But Llewelyn hadn't forgotten her, and later on, in the middle of his struggle with the king, he sent over and married her by proxy. Nothing surely but affection could have prompted a union with the daughter of an exiled man of broken fortunes. She was then shipped off to Wales with a suitable escort, but unhappily the vessel was captured off the Scilly Isles by some designing Cornishmen, and the lady, who was now twenty-three, sent up to Edward at Windsor, who held her as a trump card. It proved only too good a one.

To shorten a long and tangled story, the Prince made a treaty with Edward which left him little more than Anglesey and the present Carnarvonshire, and was married with pomp in Worcester Cathedral in the presence of the King and his Court and incidentally the King of Scotland. Many of Llewelyn's chieftains resented the business, holding that their Prince had bartered his rights for a woman. This probably influenced his subsequent rising, when the complaints of his recent subjects in the surrendered territories at their treatment by Edward's officials grew louder and louder. Early in 1282, after four years of discontented peace, revolt became general, and Llewelyn put himself at its head. His brother, Dafydd, who for years had been in England and a friend of the English, now entered the fray on his brother's side. There was a year's fighting over most of Wales, with varying fortunes, when the end came in its last month.

Llewelyn's young wife died in childbirth in the midst of the hurly-burly. He himself had gone south with a small force to stimulate his allies there, and in a surprise fight with the English garrison at Builth, on the banks of the Irfon where it joins the Wye, he fell. Not fighting gloriously at the head of his faithful followers as he would no doubt have wished, but he was caught alone, as he was hastening up to them from some mysterious errand, by enemy stragglers and speared by a soldier who didn't even know who he was, and his head struck off. Such is the brief outline of a long and complex story that has been told by many pens and left more than one gap to be filled. On indentification, the Prince's head was sent to Edward at Conway, and exhibited to his army on the shores of the Menai. Thence it was carried to London in a bag and borne in triumph on a spear-head through the streets, encircled with a mock crown of ivy, to be ultimately affixed to the gateway of the Tower.

With the death of Llewelyn, the Welsh resistance flickered out. Dafydd in due course was captured and his head sent to moulder with his brother's on the Tower of London. With them the last vestige of Welsh independence died, and the long line of Gwynneth ended, save for the infant daughter of Llewelyn who, under King Edward's custody, entered a convent and died a nun in that of Sempringham. The spot where Llewelyn fell on the banks of the Irfon is still known as Cefn-y-bedd Llewelyn, "the bank of the grave of Llewelyn", and I know it well. His headless body was in fact not laid there but carried away, says tradition, by a monk from the Abbey of Cwm-hir, and a better authority tells us was buried within the precincts of that once noble pile, which a century later Glyndwr so wantonly destroyed. Severed and bitterly severed in life, the two princely brothers, the last of their line, were thus united in death and their heads left to moulder side by side over the grim gateway of the Tower. Despair was universal, as one of the chief bards of their most tuneful century lamented:

> "O God, that the sea might engulf the land.
> Why are we left to long-drawn weariness?"

No effigy nor memorial stone can mark the unknown graves of the Princes. But in the great twin mountains that look over the Glydyrs to the peak of Snowdon and bear their names, they have in truth a nobler monument than any which human hands could raise, and one, too, that neither time nor weather can crumble but will endure as long as wild Wales itself.

As we descended the steep rough trail beside the tumbling waters of the Glaslyn stream, we left the tempest to riot in its own caves, and gleams of sunshine were trying to give the gently ruffling waters of Llyn Llydaw a less inhuman aspect. Our crag climbers from heaven knows what Olympian heights overtook us before we reached the Gorphywsfa, and after a late tea in the classic shades of the old Pen-y-Gwryd hostelry we took the long downward road for home. Nant Gwynant, as we dropped down its head, looked radiant under the belated evening sun, and the lake glimmered in its westering glow. But a dreadful thing had been going forward in our absence up aloft. No less than a speed trial or competition, and it was apparently not even yet finished from the terrific pace with which some cars and motor-cycles passed us. Cadwallader, among his other accomplishments, is an expert motorist with the spirit of competition strong within him. I was afraid once or twice that his blood was getting up and that he would join in the stampede. I believe he would have if I had not been there. And I would sooner be in a Channel steamer in a storm than race a full-grown car in a little Austin seven.

CHAPTER XIV

CARNARVON AND LLANBERIS

THE little railroad that had brought me up from Portmadoc to Beddgelert was merely a recent extension southward of the old Snowdon Ranger line, which has for this many a year connected the pass of Rhyd-ddu, four miles up the Colwyn River from Beddgelert, with Dinas on the main line, four miles from Carnarvon. Trains now run right through from the latter point to Portmadoc, a distance by its own track of about twenty-three miles. This sounds rather grand, and I daresay it is very useful. But when reduced to realities, one's notions of time and mileage as represented by the ordinary railway time-table don't come in. In other words, this rather humorous little train with its diminutive box carriages takes two hours and a half to make the through trip, including the little bit of main line. Of course this is admirable and precisely how you and I would have it. Nor do I imagine that the small hill farmers, who otherwise constitute its chief passenger traffic, exactly regard time as money. They are not that sort, however shrewd they may be at a bargain over a black steer or a bunch of mountain sheep. But it is really an admirable method of seeing an altogether charming bit of country, and much of it, too, in an intimate and quite unexpected way, as it toddles along on its solitary and unobtrusive course. It doesn't make anything like the racket of a single motor-cycle, nor outrage the spirits of the woods and mountains to a degree approaching that of these harsh and strident intruders on scenes for which they cannot conceivably have any use, and that certainly have none for them.

I was puzzled to think how it could pay over this newly constructed section, for if on one or two occasions I was not quite the only passenger, I was very nearly so. Probably in August it tells another tale. But in any case I am very grateful to it for introducing me to many nooks and corners and scenes of foreground charm that I have never seen or should have seen. Some friends of mine, who have lived within a mile of its trail all their lives, and pretty long lives too, have made the like discovery. Now I am very fond of Llyn Quellyn, and lying as it does just beyond Rhyd-ddu, on the downward slope towards the Carnarvonshire low country and about six miles by road from Beddgelert, the little railway deposits one in passing upon its very banks. This consumes three-quarters of an hour, and very pleasantly too. The little station at Beddgelert is quite a climb from the village, and the line runs on the other side of the Colwyn valley from that followed by the well-known highway to Carnarvon. On my first venture I thought we must surely be making for the summit of Moel Hebog. For we climbed about among wild woods, and skirted chasms down which brooks were brawling, and finally laboured so high up the mountain's leafy foot as to open out a most beautiful and unexpected view of Beddgelert, lying far below in its enchanting vale.

But in due course these thrilling and tortuous engineering achievements bring us out on the broad and gently sloping base of Moel Hebog. There we amble slowly along over heathy tracts and rocky pastures aglow with gorse and purple sheets of foxgloves, past little isolated homesteads and over more brawling rivulets and more leafy dingles, through thin woods of birch and scattered pines, to Rhyd-ddu. This is a straggling village at the top of the watershed which parts the streams running towards the Menai Straits from those that fall into Cardigan Bay. Here this new extension links up with the old Snowdon Ranger line, and here the trains coming from Carnarvon to Portmadoc—and *vice versa*—have to pass. If one of them fails to be up to time, passengers on the other must possess their souls in patience till its arrival. I put in fifty minutes here one evening after a long day in Carnarvon, and missed my dinner at the hotel. Not even the fine view from this point and a clear and sunny evening quite made up for this unexpected blow. The other half-dozen passengers, Welsh youths and maidens, sang part-songs and ate chocolates on the turf beside the line, neither of which pastimes were of any use to me.

A pleasant and for the most part easy walk up Snowdon starts from hereabouts. You can see the Wyddfa very plainly peeping above a long succession of green and rocky ridges that slope upwards towards it. When these are surmounted, you find yourself on the brink of the huge crater-like punchbowl of Cwm Clogwyn, the rocky peak of Snowdon towering grandly above its upper end. From thence is an easy but most inspiring walk over smoothish ground along the edge of the precipice. The opposing ridge also trending up in like manner towards the Wyddfa is followed by walkers from the farther and Llanberis side. In the boggy hollow of Cwm Clogwyn, between its shadowy triple cliffs, three or four small tarns twinkle effectively. Towards the head of the crater this smooth trail comes to a sudden end on the brink of Lechog, and with a turn to the left leaves a climb of some 500 feet up a rocky ridge to the peak. This is a simple enough matter for anyone with a normal head. Our Georgian tourists would, no doubt, have shied at it badly and racked the dictionary for resounding epithets to justify its terrors. It is quite true there is a precipice of a thousand or more feet on either hand. But the dividing craggy ridge must be, at the worst, 10 or 15 feet wide, and there is no occasion whatever to leave it for mid-air unless you wish to. As a matter of fact, though, several tourists in the last century did manage to fall over these precipices surrounding Clogwyn. I like this way up Snowdon myself, though it is not, I think, a very popular one. The great horseshoe crater, so nobly surmounted by the Wyddfa, has a northerly aspect which leaves most of its cliffs in shadow, and gives it a stern and awesome look.

I found my way up alone quite easily on the first occasion, without any particular directions, from the mere lie of the land, when stopping many years ago at a farm-house near Rhyd-ddu fishing the lakes around. Without hurrying in the least, the ascent and the return can be accomplished between breakfast and lunch at normal hours. The Wyddfa is just 3000 feet above Rhyd-ddu, the latter pass being only some 600 feet above the sea. It was on another occasion, on a very hot day in June, that I chanced to find myself alone at the top, and naturally fell into conversation with the couple who preside over the building which shelters such visitors as come up to sleep and see the sunrise, and provide refreshment for all and sundry. Despite all that has been said, and justly said, about this desecration of Snowdon, I don't mind admitting that the bottle of stone-cold, foaming Bass that these worthy souls meted out to me remains the outstanding drink of my life—oddly enough, I have heard at various times at least half a dozen people say precisely the same thing with great emphasis.

However, it was not for this ignoble libation to the mountains of Eryri that I introduce the dispenser of it who, with his wife, spent all their days and nights through the summer season on this aerial perch, 2000 feet at least, I presume, above anybody else in England or Wales, but for a strange thing that these martyrs to high latitudes told me. Now 5000 feet is nothing for residence, say, in Switzerland, as we all know. But this much lower peak of Snowdon is obviously quite another matter. For these two dwellers on it, though sturdy enough looking folk, told me that they never knew what it was to feel well up there. Their appetite vanished, and they couldn't sleep; that it had been the same with all who held the situation, and that they were compelled periodically to return to the low country to recover tone. Yet more convincing, I was told that of all the numerous people who came up to sleep and breakfast, quite a large number had no appetite at all for the excellent morning repast that is served up here, instead of being ravenous on such a stimulating occasion as would have been the case in the world below.

No! I am not going to describe the view from Snowdon, on whose peak in ancient times it was said the eagles used to sharpen their beaks when war was impending. I only once caught it in any perfection—with the whole of Wales, that is to say, the Wicklow mountains, the Isle of Man, and I think the Cumberland mountains all offering themselves to one's bewildered eyes—and that was a long time ago.

Rhyd-ddu is in truth well worth the easy journey of four miles up the Carnarvon road from Beddgelert. It is an excellent point from which to make the acquaintance of many shapely mountains invisible from the Glaslyn valley. The drooping flanks of Snowdon, pressing northward from the great Cwm Clogwyn crater, soar again to the point of Moel Goch and beyond Llyn Quellyn to the rugged summits of Moel Eilio. The parallel ridge of Hebog across the valley loses but little in altitude as it merges into the outstanding heights of the Garn and Mynydd Mawr. Y-Garn has some high flanking precipices which show up finely from here, and are a favourite haunt of cragsmen. One hapless enthusiast was killed when I was here last, not long before the war. Indeed this whole group possesses grand and rugged features, though nowhere quite 2500 feet. Llyn Gader lies in boggy meadows just below the village, rather spoilt by a small quarry at its upper end, and despite some fir woods along one side, is among the least attractive of Welsh lakes. At this season two or three boats will generally be descried floating on its surface: their occupants are not admiring the scenery, but trout fishing. If I had never fished it, I might rank its scenic qualities higher. But Quellyn down the valley, within easy sight, is far more pleasing. It lies charmingly in its green trough between the mountains, a mile or more in length and about a quarter in width. There is nothing sombre about it, though the mountain heights above are bold and stern enough. Like Tal-y-llyn and Gwynant, it is a lake not a tarn, a distinction to be felt rather than explained. On a day I spent here and hereabouts this summer, its surface was a perfect blue. A narrow fringe of meadow skirts the eastern or Snowdon shore, along which the high road runs. Willows and alders dip their boughs in its waters, while a good-sized, homely-looking inn on the bank is the only building in the picture. Shaded by large trees and flanked by outbuildings, this last had a snug, farm-house air, and a peep inside showed it to be quite obviously the haunt of the patient angler rather than of the tourist. I felt that I should like to have spent a week here had the fates allowed, for when the trout wouldn't rise, which in these Snowdon lakes is pretty often, there are lovely climbs of easy compass all around.

There was a wildish garden in front of the house, running down to the lake, and at the end of it two or three tubby boats were moored, with the rippling water making soothing murmurs against their sides—a music that in such scenes as this awakens a thousand memories. But there were no anglers here to-day. If there had been, by all the signs of the craft in the heavens above and the waters beneath, they should have had heavy baskets, though for this very reason they would probably have had empty ones! There was only a young girl, with a very slight English vocabulary, visible on the premises. They must all have gone to Wembley—anglers and all! For there was quite a *furor* for Wembley throughout North Wales. Small farmers, who had hitherto regarded a visit to Cheshire or Shrewsbury as an epoch-making event, packed their families and provisions into Ford cars and traversed the broad, strange land of the Saeson with dreadful joy and a spirit of wild adventure. Others eschewed their annual fortnight after hay-harvest at the Wells of Llandrindod or Llanwrtyd, their lashings of water, sulphur, saline, or chalybeate, their sampling of strange preachers and singing of Welsh hymns, to spend a thrilling day or two at Wembley and a week of hours looking out of train windows. No small fun this searching of fields and homesteads to an untravelled rustic, I can tell you, my blasé friend who scours the earth but hardly knows barley from wheat, or swedes from mangolds, a Hereford from a Shorthorn, or a Southdown from a Leicester. And it may be noted in passing that the Welsh sheep farmers, as others, have profited much of late, even though the butchers do fleece these hard-headed ones in their turn.

Across the narrow lake just a thin rim of red bank glints along the blue water, carrying on its top a strip of bracken, lit up here and there by the flare of foxgloves. Thence, from the water's edge, the smooth green turf slopes sharply upwards for hundreds of feet to break away into the crags and ridges above. No bird, I am sure, would flinch from flying over Quellyn, were there anything to tempt them into forsaking the willowy shores, the little meadowy strips, and the big trees of the hither side. At the foot of the lake the great bastion of the Mynydd Mawr, known as the Elephant Mountain from its suggestive shape, drops precipitously, and meeting the almost equally steep shoulder of a Moel Eilio flanker, almost closes the glen through which railway, road, and river twist for two or three miles towards the open low country. Travelling through it one day, on the little line to Carnarvon, I greatly enjoyed the scenery of this narrow gorge. For the outflowing brook followed close beside us, affording charming studies of silvery rapids and rocky, streaming pools, betwixt woody banks such as the eye never tires of. While an old mill here, a picturesque cottage there, with little patches of meadow, their brilliant verdure decked with mallow, meadow-sweet, willow-weed, iris, and other blooms that love such moist and marshy corners, gave a human touch to these sequestered scenes. For here the mountain rises high and steep and overhangs the glen upon either hand, the summit of Moel Eilio towering nobly heavenwards. A country house stands back as the gorge opens, and a cascade, a mere white streak, shoots down a mountain steep behind it most effectively.

As we stop at the "Halt" of Bettws-Garmon, the lower country opens wide and the small farms begin. Just before reaching Dinas junction, I caught sight, on the tail of a long bare ridge running northward from Mount Eilio and just lifted above this fairly populous low country, of some twenty or thirty gigantic poles, grouped about indiscriminately: they were perhaps a mile away. I should have guessed them to be 80 or 100 feet high, but there was nothing to judge by. Nor had it dawned on me for the moment what they represented, though given time I should have doubtless grasped this much. But I wasn't given time. For a farmer with a little English had broken my solitude at one of the later "Halts" and anticipated my speculations. It was, of course, the Government Overseas Wireless Station. "Those poles are seven hundred feet high." I thought he was pulling my leg or had gone astray in his English numerals, and looked it if I didn't say so. "Yes, indeed, they are sefen hundred feet high those poles whatefer."

Frankly, I didn't believe him, though of course dissembling my incredulity. I saw them later on from the other side at Llanberis at about the same distance, and was assured there on better authority that they measured 800 to 900 feet! Having had something of a turn for altitude measurement from my cradle, the idea of a pole 900 feet high set my head reeling. I have seen a tree of 300 feet in British Columbia, while the top of Salisbury Cathedral spire is not very much higher; besides, I could at least imagine a building of almost any altitude. But a pole of 900 feet stuck in the ground! A sort of beanstalk such as the historic Jack climbed—the thing suggested one of those nightmares in which uncanny elongation plays a part. I gave it up: I couldn't grapple with it at all. Moreover, they were on a distant sky-line which didn't help one much, though even then they had a weird look. It worried me so much that I wrote to Headquarters at Dinas and was officially informed that they were 400 feet high. However, there is nothing Welsh about them, and they certainly are not typical features of Welsh landscape! So enough of them—unless it be worth noting here that there really are some elsewhere of twice that height.

From Dinas there is a striking distant view westward, over a long strip of lowish coast country, of " The Rivals ",—isolated heights of noble contour rising abruptly from the north shore of Lleyn. Though under 2000 feet, on a grey day and from a dozen miles away they might almost be Snowdon itself. Carnarvon is a well-built, prosperous town of some 10,000 souls, with quite a good land-locked harbour at the mouth of the Seiont River which comes down from the Llanberis lakes. As a fortified place and port it goes back to the time of the Romans. It was then, as Segontium, the most important station in North Wales and has traces of the ancient Roman walls. The Sarn Helen, the Roman road from the south, ended here. It is supposed to be the birthplace of Helen, the mother of Constantine. A well, a hill, and other spots retain her name. It has traditions of ancient Welsh kings, but comes in to recorded history with early and futile attempts of the Normans to subdue the Welsh by way of the original fortress, the pre-

NEVIN BAY AND THE RIVALS

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decessor of the present one. In 1284, Edward I, as everybody knows, made this last one of the chief strongholds for retaining his conquest of Wales. But very few probably remember that it was the chief centre of the only post-conquest rising of the Welsh that caused any anxiety till that of Glyndwr over a century later. This one of 1294 was pretty serious. Heavy taxation was the chief cause of it, and nearly all Wales was again aflame. Edward was just leaving for France with an armed force. He turned at once with it, in a very bad temper naturally, and demanded such large further contributions in England, and in such insistent terms, particularly in the churches, that the Dean of St. Paul's died in his presence from sheer fright!

The King came to Conway and met with a desperate resistance. Indeed, he had a narrow escape of capture. There was fighting once more all over Wales. Madoc, who claimed to be a son of Llewelyn and was the most prominent of the Welsh leaders, captured Oswestry and badly frightened the Salopians before the rebellion was ultimately suppressed and Madoc safe in the Tower of London. What matters here, though, is that the Welsh leader had burst into Carnarvon on a fair day, stormed the castle, hung the Governor and his company, and burnt the town. Why the Welsh revolutionary leaders so constantly burnt their own towns, monasteries, and even cathedrals, would be ill saying. Though it may be remembered that many of these little towns were then virtually Norman outposts with groups of privileged traders. The rebellion crushed, however, Edward was on the whole lenient, and kept his rapacious officials more in hand. He didn't like the bards, of course, as when blows were likely or going forward, they were irrepressible firebrands. But his harsh laws against them in no long time became almost a dead letter, and they proceeded to sing very finely of nightingales and ladies and of gentle themes till Glyndwr stirred them up again, or, as some would say, they stirred up Glyndwr.

The castle, of course, is for visitors the great feature of Carnarvon. It is the finest example of the period in Britain and among the very finest in Europe. I spent a couple of hours in it on this occasion. It surpassed even my recollections of a former visit. For one thing, it is in excellent repair. As you pass over the drawbridge and through the great entrance into the courtyard, some three acres I believe in extent, with its beautiful turf and enclosed on every side by the walls, towers, and other buildings of the great fortress, all in such admirable condition and of so great a height, it is enormously imposing. I suppose it figures chiefly in the popular mind as the place where Edward II was born at a critical moment, and introduced by his father—no doubt as a passing jest, and not from malice aforethought, as our infant text-books told us—as a Prince of Wales who could speak no English. It may be interesting to precisians to hear that the Principality of Wales, as then understood, only covered the five recently-organized North Welsh counties. The rest of Wales was a jumble of Palatinates and was left to their Marcher Lords as before, who paid homage and service for them to the King, and, so long as that was observed, treating them as personal properties. And a sad mess, more lawless than tyrannical, these petty reguli made of their responsibilities, till Henry VIII in 1535 stepped in, cleansed the Augean stable, turned " the marches of Wales " into counties in line with the rest, and summoned representatives from both regions to Parliament. For neither had hitherto been represented. Indeed, the real union of England and Wales only dates from the much-married king. I believe it is a fact that the present title of Prince of Wales as an Edwardian inheritance is actually out of order. Edward II was created Lord of the Principality of Wales—Lord, that is to say, of the new counties only. When the Marches were swept away, the Principality ceased automatically to exist. Its term for all Wales as now used is strictly speaking, I fancy, incorrect. I feel that doubt myself whenever I use it, which, like everybody, is pretty often.

Doubts were raised some years ago as to the chamber accredited to this memorable action of King Edward. However, when Sir Llewelyn Turner became Governor of the Castle, to his own satisfaction, but not to everybody's, he set the matter at rest in favour of the small room in the Eagle Tower. It is strange that both the birth chamber of this unfortunate Prince and that other one which witnessed his violent death should still survive in a feudal castle, and both of them be the object of tourist pilgrimage! No doubts, I think, have arisen concerning the room where Edward was murdered in Berkeley Castle, and a dreary-looking little chamber it is. It was this same hapless monarch, too, that continued and completed the great castle wherein he was born. The accounts and the pay-rolls have been preserved and published. Glyndwr's people besieged it twice; it changed hands once or twice in the civil wars, but it was absolutely impregnable to anything but starvation. Its interest lies not in the few futile attempts to capture it by arms, but in its own magnificence and as a memorial of its great builder, and further as a flattering tribute to the gallant resistance of two centuries that the Welsh had put up against the Norman power. It has not the pride of pose of Harlech nor even of Conway. Its feet are in the water and the town crowds behind it—but it is magnificent. The topmost turret is 140 feet above the tide, and is one of the three that spring from the Eagle Tower, thence continuing its winding staircase heavenward.

The day had brightened and the sun had come out, so I climbed up it. The effort was about equal to the ascent of Snowdon from Rhyd-ddu, though concentrated into a shorter period. The climbing was much more dangerous, particularly in nailed boots. There were lots of people in the castle, but they affected the ground or the middle altitudes: no one was for mountaineering, and a workman at the top seemed quite surprised at my sudden appearance there. I was well rewarded, not in my mood of the moment so much at the sight of the whole Snowdon range over the foreground of the town below, filling the horizon a dozen miles off, as Snowdonia from many points had for long been my daily feast. But I looked over the wide western mouth of the Menai Straits, and again, down its winding, narrowing course and luxuriant woody shores which make a thick fringe to a rather treeless island. With still more interest I gazed over the gently rolling, richly-tinted surface of Anglesey now lit up by the too-infrequent sunshine. In the far distance the Holyhead mountain rose dimly above the flat and fertile isle, whose oak forests were levelled, so we are told, to exterminate the Druids, only to be replaced by productive fields and turn Ynys Mon into the " Granary of Wales ".

Over the sandy bars which the swift-racing tides were rapidly covering outside the little harbour of the Seiont estuary whence the Romans shipped their lead and copper, lay the dwindling old town of Newburgh. Just beyond lay the bay of Aberffraw on whose shores stood the immemorial capitol of the Princes of Gwynedd. Past here, too, in the Edwardian wars, on many occasions sailed the little ships of the hardy Cinque Port sailors, from Sandwich and Winchelsea, Hastings, Rye, and Dover, with the supplies of the English army camped upon the Menai banks. A strange bare island is this of Mona, its gently rolling surface sprinkled with little white homesteads, its weird outcrops of rocks rising like embattled fortresses here and there among the tilled fields, as in Pembrokeshire. And as in that other fertile county, are abounding relics of prehistoric days, cromlechs, stone circles, meini hirion, ogam stones; its low but wild rock-bound shores, its salt marshes, beloved of duck and snipe, pushing far inland.

The memory of a week's pilgrimage through it came vividly back to me as I stood upon the turret of the Eagle Tower, for it was in November, and a November of balmy days, blue skies, and gorgeous sunshine, the like of which in all my lifetime I have never known in Great Britain, nor has anybody else. As Môn was the ancient resort of the Druids, so it came to be a land of bards, which the presence of the Court at Aberffraw may have done something to encourage. Borrow came here and walked all over the island in pursuit of its bards, or rather of their ancient haunts. Some of his most entertaining pages relate his quaint encounters with inn-keepers, pig-jobbers, and farmers in this quest. They had never seen a Saxon tramping their roads before, and insisted that he must be a pig-jobber, as the only Englishmen even seen at large there were of that profession. While properly staggered like all his Welsh acquaintances at his Welsh speech, even when he insisted that he was bard-hunting, most of them thought he was assuming a fantastic method of striking a bargain in swine or else that he was stark mad. He struck a kindred soul here and there, to be sure, though on a humble plane, when there were quaint and lengthy disquisitions in inn-parlours over flagons of ale, on the bards of Anglesey.

When he was hunting up the home of Gronwy Owen "the illustrious", near Pentreath, a small miller insisted on his sharing their humble meal, and the delicate hospitality of the miller's wife "filled his eyes with tears". He addressed a village mason there in Welsh and was amazed to be answered in Spanish, on the principle that Borrow's accent betrayed the foreigner and Spanish was the only tongue but Welsh the villager knew, as he had worked in Chile. But when Borrow actually answered in Spanish, it nearly knocked the mason down! Every one had heard of Gronwy (b. 1723), and directed this eccentric wayfarer to the little house where he was born, a tinker's son. The woman who occupied it pointed to her little granddaughter of eight as a prodigy who could read and write, and, yet more, was a descendant of the poet. Borrow was entranced, pulled out his pocket-book and pencil, and asked her to write her name in it, which she did—as Englished "Ellen Jones, descended from afar from Gronwy Owen". A strange career had poor Gronwy, though Borrow's version is not quite accurate. He got somehow to Jesus College, was ordained, and, though a most gifted man, got nothing but small usherships and curacies which barely kept himself and his family alive. He then received a mastership at William and Mary College, Virginia, the oldest in America save Harvard, but a mere school in those days. Gronwy hated the life, and was transferred to a country parsonage where the salary, according to the prevalent custom, was paid in tobacco, which he hated still more. He died in Virginia in middle age. A sensitive, diffident, cultured Welsh scholar, he may well have starved mentally in the Virginia of that day. His Welsh poems were published later, and some of them are famous. His friend and senior, Lewis Morris, another Anglesey bard of equal fame, had a far different lot. Surveyor, poet, archæologist, historian, he mapped the coast of Anglesey and became surveyor of Crown lands and mines in Wales, yet left verse that is still treasured.

Meilyr, another bard of Mona, was the first singer of the Welsh renaissance in the twelfth century, and became chief bard (Pencerdd) at the Court of Aberffraw. He was a landowner, and the hamlet of Trefeilyr (m and f are mutable consonants) preserves his name. Some of his poems were written under the inspiration of the Welsh victories in his own century. He had other themes, though, and his lines on his own end represent the superstitious reverence of the mediæval Welsh for Ynys Enlli or Bardsey Island, and for that alone may be worth transcribing:

> "In my last days may I wait the call!
> My chosen sanctuary hath the sea beside it.
> 'Tis a solitary untrodden refuge,
> And round the churchyard heaves the bosom of the deep.
> Fair island of Mary! White isle of the Saints
> How blest to lie there against the day of uprising."

His son, Gwachmai—whose memory is preserved by the village of that name—was both chief bard of Gwynedd, celebrating the victories of its great Prince Owain, and a warrior, of which last profession he was equally proud:

> "Bright is my sword and of dazzling fashion
> in the day of battle."

I feel in my conscience that few save Welshmen will have any interest in the bards, and that I have been on Borrow's track in his pursuit of them quite long enough. But one little incident, even were Borrow plain Mr. Smith and Welsh minstrelsy not in question, I could not leave untold before I left the Eagle Tower and its wide outlook over the haunting shores of Anglesey. It is the most humorous thing in "Wild Wales", and, as told by the author, though against himself, irresistibly quaint, and must suffer badly in compression.

Now Llanerchymedd is the largest inland town in Anglesey, quite a good-sixed, prosperous old place, and has, or had when I was there last, an hotel almost more than worthy of it. Borrow was on the way there *en route* for Holyhead, and at a village inn a few miles short of it fell into congenial company—discovering, as he supposed, a genuine modern bard of Anglesey, with a more than appreciative "Sancho Panza" travelling with him. Having stood each other drinks, sipping them at leisure round a table, " a most diverting talk ensued " between Borrow and " the man in grey ", who began by modestly admitting he was a bard of Anglesey, and as he warmed to his work, achieving the position of " the first bard of Anglesey ". The " man of the bulged shoe ", Sancho Panza, who drank all he could get from his two sober companions, punctuated their talk at regular intervals by thumping the table and vociferating: " The greatest Prydydd (bard), the greatest Prydydd in Anglesey ".

Borrow was immensely impressed by the " man in grey ", who declared himself a bard first and incidentally an inn-keeper and a horse and pig jobber just off to Bangor market. He was undoubtedly also a gentleman, thought Borrow. The aristocrat, hearing that the appreciative Englishman was going on through Llanerchymedd, suggested that he should have his steak and pint at his hotel, the " W—— Arms." Borrow was delighted at the prospect of contributing his mite for the good of so genuine a poet. On reaching the town and being directed to the " W—— Arms," he rather shied at the look of it as a bit too grand for his taste, but was pleased nevertheless that his friend of an hour, " the first Prydydd in Anglesey ", should be so blest in the things of this world. So, " dusty and travel-stained ", he entered the building with mixed feelings.

" I found myself in a spacious hall. A good-looking young woman in a white dress with profusion of pink ribbons confronted me with a curtsey.

" ' A pint and a chop,' I exclaimed with a flourish of my hand and at the top of my voice. The damsel gave a kind of start." (I should think she would !)

" ' I think you asked for a pint and a chop, sir ? '

" ' I did,' " said Borrow, and then in all the manner of a knight in an historical novel, " ' Let them be brought with all convenient speed, for I am in something of a hurry.'

" ' Very well,' said the damsel with a toss of her head and a furtive backward glance at me as she went out."

Borrow didn't like the gorgeous coffee-room a bit, with its many tables, snowy linen, glass, silver, and all the rest of it, but still he felt glad to see such a fine show for the sake of his friend the owner. The maid returned. " ' What is that ? ' "

said Borrow, pointing to a bottle she placed on the table. " ' Only a pint of sherry, sir.'

" ' I ordered no sherry—I ordered ale.' "

The damsel replied that she took it for granted that a pint ordered by a gentleman like him indicated sherry, as he would hardly condescend to ale.

Borrow suppressed his choler and told her to leave the sherry as it was there, though he hated it and loved ale. Besides, he wanted to do a good turn to the master of the house.

" ' Thank you, sir,' said the girl demurely.

" ' Are you his daughter ? '

" ' Oh no, sir, only his waitress.'

" ' You may well be proud to wait on him.'

" ' I am, sir,' casting down her eyes."

Then after some few more sprightly interchanges :

" ' Has your master written any poetry lately ? '

" ' Sir ! ' said the damsel, staring at me.

" ' Any poetry,' said I, ' any pennillion ? '

" ' My master make *them* ? No, sir, my master is a respectable man and a religious gentleman who would scorn to make such profane stuff.'

" ' Well,' " said Borrow, " ' he told me he did within the last two hours, and took me into a public-house at Dyffryn Geraint where we drank ale and had much discourse. He was going on to Bangor to buy a pig or a horse." '

The astonished girl replied that her master had been in the house, indisposed for the last three days.

" ' Isn't this the W—— Arms ? '

" ' It is, sir.'

" ' And isn't your master's name W—— ? '

" ' No, sir, it is H——, and a more respectable man,' " etc. etc. Borrow repeated his recent experience and the damsel replied contemptuously that she had heard vaguely of a person called W—— who kept a mug-house in the town, and that perhaps he had the impudence to call it the " W—— Arms ".

After a little more amusing and rather tart dialogue in the course of which Borrow quoted Gronwy Owen to the disdainful damsel, he had to give in, and rather ungraciously declared that he would not have had his " pint and chop " in this gorgeous palace save for such delusion.

" ' How truly distressing ! '

" ' Well, sir, you have only to thank your acquaintance who chooses to call his pot-house by the name of a respectable hotel kept by a respectable, religious man,' etc. etc. 'There, sir, is your pint and chop, and if you want more, will you please to ring.' "

After eating a few morsels, Borrow looked at the sherry and with a wry face took a glass. " I have always maintained," he declared, " a sovereign contempt for sherry, a silly, sickly compound, detestable stuff. However, as I shall have to pay for it, I may as well drink it, and by the time I had finished my chop, I had finished the bottle." Wonderful man, in the middle of a hot day's walk too !

But he paid his bill and tipped the beribboned damsel, who blest him, and even expressed a desire to see him again. He then trudged away to Holyhead as if nothing (in the way of sherry I mean) had happened : thinking of Gronwy and Lewis Morris. To his disgust, through some mischance he had to take the train, another of his abhorrences, for the last stage, and yet worse, go to another big hotel, which he entered in a thoroughly bad humour.

" ' Send boots,' I roared to the waiter as I flung myself down in an arm-chair in a magnificent coffee-room. 'What the deuce are you staring at ? Send boots, can't you, and then ask what I can have for dinner.' "

A venerable, grey-haired man now appeared, and on learning where Borrow had come from, remarked : " Did your Honour ever hear of Gronwy Owen ? " My goodness ! did he ever hear of him ! And the two were off on Anglesey bards. I must close this scene with the fact that Borrow supped and slept well in this detestably swagger hotel.

It was in that last, though even so rather remote, visit of mine to Anglesey, and in that wonderful late autumn alluded to, that I sat with a Welsh friend, who also knew his Borrow, in the coffee-room of the " W—— Arms " at Llanerchymedd. We had the hotel to ourselves, and spent the long evening smoking in a couple of arm-chairs before a cheerful fire in the very room where the prophet and the beribboned waitress held their encounters and the bottle of sherry was drunk under protest. It may be imagined with what zest we recalled the scene, to say nothing of many others in that immortal tour. At this moment of writing I see a critic in the " Times " declares that you must be born a Borrovian or very much the reverse. I daresay it is so. But I feel sure that to appreciate " Wild Wales " thoroughly, the reader must know the country and something of its people. At the same time a reader thus equipped has undoubtedly to face a good many shocks that the merely " born Borrovian " will be saved. If I have ventured in these pages to recall too exclusively the humorous side of " Wild Wales ", it is enough to say that " the wind on the heath " flavour and the " atmosphere " which Borrow carried with him is not transcribable—as the Borrovian will surely take for granted.

The day was still young for midsummer when I left the Eagle Tower for Llanberis, making the rather uninteresting nine-mile journey thither by rail, over the low-lying country to the sudden uplift of the Snowdon mountains. As so often in Wales, the Seiont River, whose short estuary forms the harbour, cheered up our otherwise uneventful path with all the wayward humours of a mountain stream twisting in and out of it, through woodland brake and open pasture-land. But if the day was still young for midsummer, it was no longer bright, and as I got out at Llanberis station the clouds were down upon the mountain-tops and a light drizzle had set in. I don't care much for Llanberis, though it is a good base for ascending Snowdon either on foot or by the mountain railway. Its two lakes, Llyn Padarn and Llyn Perris, only severed by a narrow strip of land, with the overhanging mountains into whose heart they drive, must have been beautiful enough in former days. But what with the modern village of hotels and lodging-houses on the west bank, and the quarrymen's settlements on the other, and yet more, much more, the gigantic cutting and carving of the face of the mountains on the eastern side of both lakes into ridges and terraces, nature has here been terribly defaced. From the industrial point of view, however, the busy scene on so vast a

CARNARVON CASTLE

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scale and climbing so high heavenwards, together with the rumbling, the clatter, and constant blasting, is imposing enough.

I had vainly hoped to walk up to the top of Llyn Perris and renew acquaintance with the tail at least of the famous pass up to Pen-y-gwyrd between the eastern flank of Snowdon and the Glydyrs, the grimmest in Wales. But before reaching the foot of Llyn Perris, the drizzle turned to heavy rain and I had to take cover under the big trees that overhang the road, and remain in silent contemplation of the old tower of Dolbadarn lifted up on the isthmus between the two lakes. I tried to fancy what sort of a time poor Owen Goch had for the twenty years his brother, the last Llewelyn, kept him there in durance vile, merely as a potential though quite legitimate candidate for a share in the reduced kingdom of North Wales. And this, too, despite the remonstrances of his own friends and even his bards at such unfraternal treatment of a brother who had committed no crime. But the Prince maintained that the very fact of brotherhood was a sufficient reason. It was Giraldus who declared that the Welsh princes loved their brothers much more when dead than alive, since while above-ground they were almost always fighting one another for the succession or for a share of it. Under the Welsh laws of inheritance, plus the fosterage system, this is not surprising, and was hardly worth the epigram. It may be remembered, too, that Glyndwr imprisoned Grey of Ruthin in this grim and then solitary fortress. But Grey, more fortunate though less deservedly so, got out of it in a year by the payment of an enormous ransom which ruined him for life. Still he would have had lots of time in a year to reflect what a fool he had been to bring matters to such a pass and transform himself from a little tyrant in the gladsome Vale of Clwyd to a prisoner in these horrible grim mountains.

How appalling must have been their long winter evenings in this awesome spot. Twenty years of it too! For the Red Owain was not, I think, a poet like so many of his friends and forbears, while it is quite certain that Grey of Ruthin had neither the philosophical temperament nor any literary tastes! Glyndwr incarcerated Davy Gam of Brecon here, who had treacherous intent on his life, and whom Owen spared, it may be remembered, at the intercession of his friends, for Davy lived to fight and fall at Agincourt. Here, too, grouped about, is the little village of old Llanberis, with its church dedicated to St. Peris. In Pennant's time there was a Holy Well here at which an ancient sibyl told fortunes by the demeanour of a little fish in it. On the then virgin shores of Llyn Padarn, too, dwelt a famous old woman, Margaret Evans. At that time, 1784, she was ninety years old, but still hale, " the last specimen ", as Pennant quaintly puts it, " of the ancient female fair. She was the greatest hunter, shooter, and fisher of her time. She kept a dozen at least of dogs, terriers, greyhounds, and spaniels, all excellent of their kind. She killed more foxes in one year than the united hunts do in ten, rowed stoutly, and was queen of the lake. Fiddled excellently and knew all our old music, and at the age of seventy had been the best wrestler in the countryside, and few of our young men dared try a fall with her. She was also shoemaker, blacksmith, joiner, boat builder, and maker of harps, built her own boats, and was under contract to carry the copper ore down the lakes. All the neighbouring bards paid their addresses to her, and celebrated her exploits in verse. At length she gave her hand to the most effeminate of her admirers, as if determined to maintain the superiority which nature had bestowed on her."

I saw very little, as may be imagined, of Snowdon on this occasion, for heavy clouds shrouded most of the mountain. As I returned to the station a rather odd and humorous incident occurred. Two elderly working-men were standing against the wall by the entrance, and wishful to know the precise position of the Wyddfa from this point, as it was now hidden by clouds, I put the question to them casually, and one of them with much alacrity pointed out the direction. As I paused for a moment before entering the little station, one of the pair said, " Excuse me, sir, why do you ask for the Wyddfa ? " " Why ? " replied I, " because I wanted to know its position, of course ! " " Well," said he, " in all my life I never before heard an Englishman ask for the *Wyddfa*." He seemed honestly amazed, and continued : " Do you speak Welsh, sir ? " " Nothing worth mentioning," I truly and modestly replied, " but I know a certain amount of it, a good deal of Wales, and something of Welsh history." At that a porter standing near pricked up his ears and joined our group. " I suppose you know, sir, that Owen Glyndwr was about here a good deal, and shut up his prisoners in Castell Padarn ? " I said I did, and after a few remarks on Glyndwr by the porter, though in two minds about the matter, I couldn't resist giving them what I knew would be a terrific shock, and remarked, " Yes, I know that Glyndwr was about here, as I wrote his life." The two elder men fell back astonished against the wall, while the porter, a younger man, after steadying himself for a moment to recover from his surprise, concluded I was not jesting, sprang forward, and seizing my hand wrung it forcibly. " And indeed, sir, I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart ! " While the other two contented themselves with running explosions of surprise of the Welsh-English variety—" Well ! Well ! An Englishman too. Dear me ! Dear me ! "

From this dramatic scene and at this point I had just time to jump into my starting train. It was provoking that as I left Carnarvon the sun came out again. There was some compensation in it, though, as the little train to Beddgelert waited at Rhyd-ddu station, and was held up for nearly an hour there, much longer than I needed under the circumstances for admiring the beautiful view I have already accredited to that high spot. Dinner was long over when I reached my hotel, after really rather a strenuous day, including about six hours in trains of various sorts, which in those six hours covered about forty-five miles. This is not a complaint. Far from it, for I thoroughly enjoyed five at least of those hours. You can see a lot from a train, even passing through Blankshire. Yet I have seen strangers immersed in a picture magazine through the whole Vale of Llangollen.

CHAPTER XV

THE LLEYN PENINSULA

IN the meantime Cadwallader, who had emerged safe and sound from further assaults on Snowdonian precipices, was in a mood to satisfy the topographical and historical tastes which held him in his gentler hours. We had promised ourselves, and despite the weather got them, two days of excursions in Lleyn in his little two-seater car. When I had last roamed about that fascinating peninsula there were roads at its extremities which would have held up a cyclist. But I gathered and was soon to realize that times in that respect had changed. Not that Cadwallader would have bothered much about such a trifle, as he plainly showed when we got beyond the normal motoring limits.

Now Lleyn is the ancient cantref that covers most of the long western peninsula of Carnarvonshire, which reminded Mr. Baring-Gould of a smaller Cornwall. Of the four cantrefs, speaking in broad terms, that Edward I turned into Carnarvonshire, Beddgelert, though on the northern edge of Ardudwy in Merioneth, is actually in Arvon, from which the shire and its capital took their names. Between it and Lleyn lies Eivionyd, while to the east of Arvon came Archwellydd with Nant Conwy. Beyond these four or rather five cantrefs that with Anglesey held out to the last, lay others irrelevant here, which stretched away from the Conway River, that great line of defence, then guarded by the Welsh fortress of Deganwy, over the Vale of Clwyd, all known in the Middle Ages as the Perfyddwlad. Over this large and more enviable district the Welsh and their English invaders were for ever sweeping back and forth, though it never received, or at any rate never retained, an English settlement till the Edwardian conquest.

And even then they were but military garrisons in castles which left behind them a mere sprinkling of English families that in all save name lapsed in course of time into Welsh. This long disputed and oft ravaged territory extended to Flint—or Tegengl—which was usually kept in order by the Earls and Constables of Chester, that ever martial and in truth turbulent Palatinate. Even in Flint there are still plenty of Welsh-speaking people.

But I am drifting badly out of my course, which is westward, and I ask my reader's pardon for such discursiveness. Yet I should like to take the opportunity here of saying once and for all that the tangle of Welsh history, as a whole, is so great, owing to the Welsh laws of inheritance, to internecine and alien wars, that nearly all statements regarding provinces and boundaries must be made in general terms, no doubt sufficient, probably more than sufficient, for most English readers. I would dare further and say sufficient for most Welsh readers. Any number of educated Englishmen, if locked into a room and given a few sheets of paper, could write a brief and reasonably correct synopsis of English history. But by comparison that would be child's play! How many Welshmen, despite the scholarly patience with which in recent years historians have laboured at it, in whole or part, could do this much, with even the latest and most dramatic period from the arrival of the Normans to the Edwardian conquest. Is there a man, other than a distinguished expert or two lurking perchance in the Welsh Universities or in some country parsonage, the natural first objects of search, endowed with the memory of six Macaulays, who could do this thing if taken by surprise and no cribbing allowed? I wonder!

So away we went, Cadwallader and I, on another of our rare fine days, heading for Clynnog-fawr on the north coast of the peninsula, our first stage. Passing up through Rhyd-ddu we turned left-handed down a sharply descending by-road which took us into the wild and romantic Nantlle valley. We skirted the little tarn of Dywarchen, formerly, perhaps still, notable for its good-sized trout. We dropped down yet farther, opening by the way a gate or two, into the head of the narrow vale. To our right, the lofty ridge of the southern spur of Mynydd-mawr followed our course with its rugged summit and rock-plated breast. To our left sprang up yet more precipitously the gloomy northern front of Trwm-y-Ddysgl, on which more than one cragsman has met his fate. We could see the two Nantlle lakes glittering below and beyond us. But on reaching them we found the old adage that all is not gold that glitters, painfully illustrated. For the smirch of a mining and slate-quarrying district hovered about their shores and played havoc with their neighbourhood. Pen-y-groes, almost more than a village, is busy and unspeakably hideous. It stands at the very western entrance to the Snowdon mountains, though happily not so far pushing its dirty tentacles into them.

A few minutes, and we had forgotten all about this passing nightmare, and were gliding over the pleasant undulations of the peninsula. We left Glynllifan on our right, the seat of the Winns, the Newborough family whose interests in all this region are great. It was the family chief, the eccentric old Lord Newborough who, dying within easy memory, had himself buried on Bardsey Island among the 20,000 saints whose bones lie there, though he had himself, I believe, no sort of claim to canonization. Still, he had quite as much perhaps as many of his present neighbours! On reaching the low seashore which the road now skirts for miles, sloping, stone-walled pastures intervening, the church of Clynnog came into distant view, with the triple-peaked Rivals (yr Eifl) falling grandly from nearly 2000 feet and dropping about midway sheer into the sea. Is there anything on this majestic scale on the coasts of Britain, short of the west coast of Scotland? Assuredly not in Devon or Cornwall, that otherwise hold the field in cliff scenery!

Now Clynnog is one of the finest and largest churches in North Wales, and rather unique in that country, as of the late Perpendicular style and the reign of Henry VII. It stands on the site of an ancient monastery founded in the early seventh century by St. Beuno, who among Welsh saints ranks second only to St. David. He led quite a stirring life. Born in Powys, he wandered hither after disappointments in various places, though many other churches in North Wales bear his dedication. For some centuries his monastery here at Clynnog "vied with Bangor in fame, dignity, and importance. As a centre of learning and missionary enterprise it shared with the metropolitan church the munificence and thank-offerings of kings and princes", while its abbots held by right a seat in the High Court of the Kings of Gwynedd.

Most North Welsh country churches of interest appeal rather for their rugged antiquity or for their romantic situations. But this one, though in situation sufficiently inspiring, is quite different. Its exceptional size, for one thing, with nave, transepts, choir, and west tower crenellated and crocketted, all make for a quite stately exterior. While within, its carved screens, miserere seats, sedilia, carved roof, Tudor windows, and other features of interest fulfil the promise of its external dignity. The detached chapel of St. Beuno, though of rather later date, is in the same style, and is connected with the church by a corridor formed of materials taken from the shrine of the earlier church under which the Saint was buried. The massive rude oak "chest of St. Beuno" was accessible on my former visit. On this one it was locked up, which meant delay for no particular purpose. Indeed, the chapel had in the interval been restored. It was originally built about 1540 over the old altar tomb under which St. Beuno lies. Sick folk flocked from far and near to seek a cure by lying on it; even in 1776 Pennant found a paralytic from Merioneth thus extended. Leland visited the church when it was fairly new, and greatly admired it. Till a century ago its upkeep was assisted by offerings put into St. Beuno's chest by pilgrims and others. Local farmers frequently contributed animals in lieu of cash, driving them into the churchyard, which through "travellers' tales" gave rise to a notion in England that these remoter Welsh still offered up sacrifices! All calves and lambs born with a certain mark on the ear, known as St. Beuno's, had a slightly fictitious value.

As when last here I noticed in one of the transepts the names of farmers with their residence inscribed upon pew doors and again on small mortuary tablets let into the walls just above, going back over two hundred years. Probably these families, if still surviving, no longer sit here, but find more emotional comfort in the little Bethel yonder. It would seem passing strange to many at first thought that a people with so much feeling and sense of the past, could break such links with it as these ancient churches form. The answer is a stereotyped one, but yet it only in part explains this ever-abiding paradox. Had the attitude of governments, bishops, and squires been only reasonably sane a hundred years ago, the musical voices of these people might still have filled these ancient buildings and many later ones besides. Then there is the famous well of St. Beuno, walled in upon the roadside near by, notable even among the innumerable wells scattered over Wales. Whether it has benevolent or, again, curative powers, I do not know. But it is a " cursing well " anyway, and invites your imprecations on anyone you particularly dislike. As Cadwallader is stationed at Belfast, I suggested he should expend a penny curse on the extraordinarily repellent-looking head of Mr. de Valera. But he said he wasn't worth even so much. There were lots of people I should like to have cursed, with all the small change I had about me, but there was no time to waste in thinking them out. So away we went at a smooth and gentle gait in the little two-seater, Cadwallader still restraining himself and keeping his other hat on.

A mountainous ridge had already sprung up on our left, while the Rivals were looming up nearer and nearer, straight ahead of us, till in brief time the meadowy strip between road and sea disappeared behind an obstructing hill. Turning aside, we passed up between these opposing heights and soon had, beneath and before us, a deep-sunk valley dipping to the sea, with the Rivals towering up immediately beyond it. At the head of the valley is set the village of Llanelhiarn, from which the ascent of the peaks is an easy task.

But there is here a most charming little cruciform church, high set amid its well-tended graveyard, though low pitched in form, and restored not long before I was last here. I was then fortunate in finding the vicar inside it. He told me that in the restoration the walls, when scraped, disclosed all manner of inscriptions and rude illustrations, by the old pilgrims to

Bardsey. For we are here on the main pilgrim road, and many of the churches along it displayed similar mementoes of these pious wayfarers: some sedilia and a fifteenth-century rood-screen bearing quaint devices are still here. The original pews, said the vicar, had been faithfully copied in the recent restoration, despite the fact that they would suggest at the first glance the strange whim of some ambitious churchwarden, for the uprights are not of solid wood but slender, gracefully-turned rails supporting the book-ledge. There are two raised oak chairs fronting the low-arched chancel where the churchwardens sit in state. But the effect of this little, low-roofed, but well-lighted church, with its pilgrim memories and quaint railing pews, is altogether charming, and I should say, from a pretty wide experience, unique.

Passing through the village we chose the finer but rougher of the two roads for Nevin, which climbs over the back slope of the Rivals. But first we had our lunch by the roadside above the village, at the point from which the visitor finds his by no means toilsome way up the mountain, and generally to the middle summit, as it carries the famous prehistoric fortress of Trer-Ceiri (the town of fortresses). I was once up there on a clear day and got the best of its noble outlook, which covers the whole of Cardigan Bay to St. David's Head in Southern Pembroke, the nearer view of the long north coast of Lleyn, to say nothing of its interesting interior, and, finest of all, the entire group of the Snowdon mountains as seen from the west. Trer-Ceiri is a large, oblong enclosure of dismantled stone walls, within which are several groups of buildings of various shapes and sizes in the same shattered condition, and for the most part what are known by archæologists as "round huts"—so frequent in Wales.

This, however, is the finest example of a prehistoric hill fortress in Wales. These fragmentary buildings are, by the Welsh, known as Cytiau Gwaeddelod (Irishmen's huts). They are traditionally associated with the Irish invasions of West Wales preceding the Roman period; for the Romans who did such extensive copper and lead mining in Lleyn would certainly have tolerated no barbarians about them. These hill fortresses in Lleyn and elsewhere are credited with being the points of their resistance to the Goidel and subsequent Brythonic conquerors and masters of Wales. It was out of the question, bound as we were for the Land's End, to revisit Trer-Ceiri. Besides, Cadwallader had been up there quite recently.

So we took the steep and roughish road, the old pilgrim's way in fact, that climbs the pass between the Rivals and a mountain which lies to the back of them. Thence downward through wildish heath-clad commons, till lying far below we saw the harbour of Porth Dinlleyn with the striking natural breakwater against the west, that it throws out to sea forming thereby the little bay of Nevin. It even held the scales for a long time with Holyhead, when the question of a chief port for Ireland was under consideration. But the tubular bridge over the Menai in 1850 settled the question. It is free enough now, I fancy, from traffic of any sort but in slates, which are quarried in these mountains. But Nevin as a little watering-place lying in its arms is mainly patronized, I think, by North Welsh people. Its villa and residential quarter up on the slope has grown a lot since I was here last. We had, of course, caught no glimpse of Nant Gwrtheyrn, where Vortigern lies in a wild glen behind the Rivals and fronting the sea—though a good sight of it may be had from the westernmost peak. Driven from pillar to post—we met his shade, it will be remembered, in the uneasy company of the youthful Merlin at Dinas Emrys—he is said to have found his last refuge here, in this grim and lonesome spot. From the chalk cliffs of Thanet and the highly civilized—for those times—and Romanized shores of Kent, to Nant Gwrtheyrn, marks a progress of despair and misadventure that I admit strains one's faith. When rambling about in those old Kentish points of Saxon invasion as I frequently have done for many good reasons, the story as told from that end does test rather severely the Celtic version. However, there he is in a stone coffin near the big mounds on which stood the humble dwelling that sheltered his last years or months. A 'Log-cabin to White House' career dismally reversed, even if he brought it on himself.

It was here at Nevin, too, and why here and not at Carnarvon we may well wonder, that Edward I celebrated the conquest of Wales by a splendid tournament attended by knights from all over England and Wales and even from Normandy. Perhaps it was confined to the "expeditionary force", for, after all, to slip down here by sea in fine weather from the Menai Straits would be nothing, even then. Perhaps Edward had acquired an eye for effect and for the picturesque in scenery! He had assuredly seen all samples of the British variety. We passed out of Nevin by the main road heading for Aberdaron, over a dozen miles distant. The coast now drops again, and farming lands slope down to the sea which has for so long backed out of our sight, under the mountain foot. Our road follows the crown of the slope, while the inland country waves away to the left. There is more than a touch of Anglesey about this; something, too, of Pembrokeshire in the regions bordering on its iron-bound western coast, and just a flavour of central Ireland. Could the expelled ancients of Trer-Ceiri have left a whiff of their native atmosphere behind them? Hardly any trees are to be seen but the meagre groves which make effort to shelter the snug white-washed homesteads sprinkled about, from the fierce gales that must rage over this open, sea-bound country.

But no desert land is this! Good grain crops were endeavouring to ripen in this sunless season, and mown hay was lying in ample swathes upon good-looking meadows. There were as many shorthorns in the pastures as black Welshmen—a sure sign of quality in such a land as this. Inconsequent rocky heights shot up here and there above the farming lands, as, like Anglesey and Pembroke, is the way of this peninsula. A few miles southward Carn Madryn sprang 1200 feet above the ancient seat of the Jones-Parrys and Yales—for Madryn and Yale were much inter-related. There was something of a "Jack Mytton" here fifty odd years ago, though his tastes ran in other lines. So Madryn is now a county agricultural college. It derives its name from a granddaughter of Vortigern and wife of Ynyr, King of Gwent. Tradition has it that her grandfather was burnt out of his last poor refuge in Gwrtheyrn by his implacable foes, and that she with her little son fled from the burning mêlée and found refuge on the fortified crown of Madryn.

Thence they escaped to Cornwall, and the boy in course of time, taking orders, returned to Lleyn and built a church under the hill, upon whose crown his mother and he had found refuge, and called it after her name. In Madryn Hall, before its sale, there was a beautiful marble statue of this Queen of Gwent flying from the flames with her little boy. This lady must have been of an amazingly filial disposition to leave her throne in warm and fertile Monmouth to cherish a fallen grandsire in this remote and storm-beaten glen—perhaps she had to! Madryn, by the way, means a fox, and I will leave it at that!

We passed by little villages, Tydwerliog and Penllech, facing north down the long bare slopes of farming land to the still, tranquil sea. Under the inconsequent little hill of Cefn-amlwch we swerved inland to Mellteyrn. Another great, rugged, heath-clad ridge 1000 feet high forged out towards us from the southern shore, where its rocky tail was lashed by the dreaded waters of Hell's Mouth, or Porth Nigel Bay.] Passing these barriers, we ran on for three or four miles, and then dropped sharply down from a height upon the remote, romantic, and historic little port and bay of Aberdaron, the *ultima thule* of North Wales—its Land's End, unknown to tourists but for a recent and still negligible few, unknown in journals that bristle in holiday and other seasons with the oft-told tales of familiar scenes. We stood upon the shore of the little bay, perhaps a mile in width from point to point, of fish-hook rather than horseshoe shape, the shank on the westward forging out nearly two miles in a rugged cliff to the cape of Pen-y-cil. The opposing headland of Trwyn-y-Penrhyn, extended somewhat by the two rocky islets of Gwylan, fawr and fach, shuts out the east. A stretch of smooth, silvery sand confronts the little village of a score of houses in the bend of the bay. A few boats and fishing-gear lay idly upon it, near the edge of the houses. There was no one about. A gentle ripple stirred the surface of the otherwise tranquil bay and tinkled softly on the sand. For the long, dark headland of Pen-y-cil kept out the light breeze from the west, which was astir and just ribbing the waters of the outer sea.

The whole scene was one of infinite repose, lit up by the rays of a hitherto coy sun. And here was the old pilgrim church beside the village, just lifted above the reach of the tides. It yielded in part to their fury in recent years and underwent some restoration. It contains a nave and aisle, with separate and parallel gabled roofs divided within by slender and graceful columns, and is entered by a round-headed doorway. Replaced higher up by a new building, this one is only used, I fancy, on special occasions. The pews had gone when I was last here, but the naked condition of this ancient church, with the arches springing from its wide bare floor, are all the more suggestive of the pilgrim days. One can the more readily picture these way-worn souls lying huddled all over it, waiting on the winds and waves for a passage over the dangerous tides to the sacred isle, from here some four miles distant. For this was the end of their long toil for thousands and thousands through several centuries who sought the island of the saints. The sound and the maimed, both those concerned only with the next world and those smitten with the ills of this one, struggled here somehow in hopes of leaving their bones among those of the 20,000 saints. Two pilgrimages to Ynys Enlli apparently counted as one to Rome. Provisions for relief and support for the travellers seem to have been made in all the churches on the pilgrim's road through Lleyn and Eivionyd.

But quite another scene was enacted here in the year 1406, already alluded to, when Glyndwr, Edmund Mortimer, and Earl Percy met in secret to divide England and Wales between them. They met, we are told, at the house of David Daron, Dean of Bangor, who owned this World's End, and was a supporter of Glyndwr. Hotspur had been dead three years. The rather intractable old Earl had again forfeited the King's indulgence and was virtually a fugitive on his way to the Continent. At the moment when Shakespeare pictures the scene before the battle of Shrewsbury, there was the possibility of success in such an untowardadventure. But now! Even the indomitable Glyndwr, who had probably sailed over from Harlech with his weakish son-in-law, must have felt his heart rather sad within him. Maybe, too, it was a lowering or even a stormy day, for it was February, and I can imagine Aberdaron under dark skies and with spray flying as ill-suited to cheer the councils of a losing cause. But Glyndwr had brought his tough old bard, Iolo, with him to liven them up. And the old man brought out his harp, and on this wild wintry shore sang the prophecy of Merlin. How the mole, accursed of God (Henry IV), should come to destruction, that a dragon (Owen) and a wolf (Mortimer) would prevail, and with the lion uniting, divide the kingdom of the mole.

But happily there was neither spray nor gloom to-day. We were not quite at the Land's End: there was a couple of miles yet, to be covered on foot, everybody said; but Cadwallader, who had never been here before, scented an experiment, and I began to feel uncomfortable. A steep lane headed off for the broken country, making for the end of all things. It was the route followed by walkers to the Point, so said the villagers in halting English. There was no holding Cadwallader, or rather would not have been, for I didn't try. So he went at it with the car, and down the steep beyond over a deplorable surface. He was getting interested, and the worse things got the faster he went. He had put on his other hat! Some people by a cottage in the hollow looked surprised, for it wasn't a motor road. But on and upward Cadwallader sped, by a corking lane obviously contrived to serve the last little farm in Wales, rough enough for anything, and just wide enough for a pair of wheels, to meet which would have provided, so far as I could see, an insoluble problem.

However, my pilot was enjoying himself, and I was a fatalist, so that was all right. At the top of the final long ascent was a gate and a small house, with the only cart just waiting to start our way, which was lucky.

Beyond the gate, where Cadwallader rather reluctantly left the car, we were out on the moorland, heathy and rocky, which waved all around. Ahead and below spread out the rippling, sunlit sea, with Bardsey, three miles away, floating like a great seal with head high in air and body low in the water. A trail over green, sheep-bitten sward carried us gently down between ridges of heath and crag to the brink of the storm-beaten and weather-worn cliffs that faced the open sea. Cadwallader disappeared over their edge almost at once in search of the ruins of the little chapel of St. John which he had much in his mind and believed to be somewhere at their base. For it was the shrine where such pilgrims as took boat from here, instead of Aberdaron, as being the shorter passage, said their last devotions before facing the dangerous and racing tides of the passage to the island of their hopes. Yet the old British saints came all the way here from Ireland in their coracles! Marvellous watermen these hardy missioners must have been.

I left Cadwallader to his cliff-climbing and shrine-hunting, and wandered northward along the cliff edge towards the high portion of this headland of Braich-y-pwll, for it was from that side I had come here on my last visit. Bardsey lay beautifully poised to the south-west in harmonious line with the whole Lleyn peninsula. For it presents us here with its upper end, a mile in width, its mountain rising 800 feet almost sheer above the sea and the adjoining and visible strip of pasture-land, while its long two miles of low-lying tail is hidden from sight. No swift, treacherous tides were showing their teeth at any rate this afternoon. The waters of the three-mile strait lay at rest and serene. A purple tinge lay upon their beribbed and mottled surface over its farther half towards the island shore, while nearer our own the westering sun got in and shot it with gleams of gold. Close under the cliffs the clear green water heaved gently, with just swell enough to give a lazy roll to a couple of small fishing-boats with a man in each handling a net between them.

It shames me that I have never crossed to the island. But it is in any case a much bigger job than it looks. Even so, it was not the effort of getting there that held me off, but the possibility of being caught by a sudden break in the weather and having to spend a week there. For the tides in the strait run so strongly that a very little disturbance makes the passage difficult and, in a rough sea, impossible. Nor formerly could you choose your weather and run down in an hour in a car from Criccieth or Pwllheli to Aberdaron. While if you found problematical and primitive harbourage there over the village shop, it was possible the next morning might show a tumbling sea. The island fairly beckoned to us this afternoon had there been time. It was well there was not, for long before we reached home the heavens were black and the wind was driving a heavy rain against our backs. With glasses, and even without them, I could plainly see in all detail the rugged front of the solitary mountain and the walled fields of the farming lands below. For nearly all the inhabitants, now less than the four score which has been the minimum for all recorded time, are engaged in farming.

Strangely enough, at this very moment of writing, comes a telegram to the London Press to the effect that the mainland is greatly disturbed about Bardsey. There has been no word of them for a month. A boat-load of provisions had gone over a fortnight since and never returned. The impetuous seas in the strait and on the Aberdaron cliffs have completely cut them off from the world. Their friends and relations have had no tidings of them. Just fancy, in this year of grace and of science and invention, that a community but three miles from this old shore should be out of reach for a month! The report continues that just before this month of tempests the natives were seriously considering shifting permanently to the mainland in a body, on account of troubles of transit and marketing. It seems a bit late in the day! A larger population has lived there contentedly for years unnumbered. Is it conceivable that the cinema craving has reached even this isolated and sacred isle? Still, I hope these speculations may be premature. Besides, they may have eaten one another up before we get the next news!

The ruins of St. Mary's Abbey, founded by Cadvan in the sixth century, are on the north side of the island. All that is left, however, is part of a tower and the remains of a chapel. A hundred years ago a great number of graves were discovered, about two feet apart, and were lined with tile or white stone. These we may suppose are a remnant of the 20,000 saints. The story runs that the first instalment of the holy throng were refugees from the well-known massacre at the vast monastery of Bangor-Iscoed of 1200 monks, out of a total of 2400, by Ethelfrid, King of Northumbria, about the year 600. An old legend tells how the earlier monks of the Bardsey monastery behaved themselves so exceptionally well—not a little assisted, one may fancy, by lack of temptation—that the Almighty conceded them the privilege of dying by seniority. But after a time they fell away from grace, and had to take their chance of life and death like other mortals. Though the island grows good crops, no trees will live on it, being wiped out in infancy by the tremendous south-west winds. The people have to come to church or chapel at Aberdaron, so the average annual attendance of even the most fervid can hardly be high, while the impious, if there are any on so sanctified a place, can defy their pastor with impunity. There is quite a good little harbour for such as are fishermen, and a badly needed lighthouse. When possible, the natives are buried at Aberdaron. But any number of them must have been laid to rest in their native isle through all the ages. And what more could they want, seeing that thousands have crawled hundreds of miles in former days for such a privilege; while only yesterday a great magnate, its noble owner, as we have seen, had his remains conveyed thither with no little pomp, and rests under a befitting monument, on which is inscribed :

"Safe in this island
  Where each saint would be,
How wilt thou smile
  Upon life's stormy sea."

So once more, after reflecting that I was probably after all to die without treading that sacred and romantic soil, I turned my back on it. For Cadwallader had returned to the upper air after a successful search for the shrine. We returned up the hill to the car, and had some thrilling moments taking the declivities in the reverse on the return journey to Aberdaron. "The only historic association enjoyed by Aberdaron", says an important guide-book, "is with 'Dick of Aberdaron'". Well, I never! The said Dick was born there, of quite illiterate peasant stock, early in the last century, and remained outwardly, despite his rambles, a dirty, unkempt peasant till he died at sixty—the master, in a weird fashion, so it is said, of thirty-five languages. I have told his story elsewhere, and am not in the mood at the moment to descend to such unutterable bathos.

We had to go home, some forty to fifty miles, without dallying, and it will be enough to say that Cadwallader saw to that. At Mellteyrn we swerved to the right and steered a middle course up the peninsula for Pwllheli. I should like to have taken the south coast road, which, save for the mountain group of the Rivals and Nevern, is, for its wild cliff scenery, far more picturesque. So Hell's Mouth, Penkilan Head, Llanbedrog, and Abersoch had to be left for the next time. Ah, those next times! They are for the young and sanguine, and not always even for them. However, though we had to travel at the pace of the ordinary motorist, I was glad to pick up some of the old threads. We edged along the shallow fertile valley of the winding Swch, notable for its fine fattening grass-lands, and left it to find its tortuous way to Abersoch, now quite a little summer resort—in my day a lonely outpost of such things, only discovered by a Welsh family or two of discretion and a stray reading-party of adventurous Oxonians.

We passed the woodlands of Nanhoran, the country-seat for many generations of the Edwards family, the outermost of such places in North Wales. We traversed the charming vale of Nant Bodlas which cleaves the wooded precincts of Carn Madryn. Out again into the lower country, in half a dozen miles we struck the cross highway from Nevern to Pwllheli, just missing by a few hundred yards the long-ago abode of the Bodvels of Bodvel, one of the few territorial names in Wales, though never, I think, an important one. It is, or was when I last saw it, a rather meagre-looking, large farm-house by the roadside. Yet it is associated with two famous eighteenth-century personages, as anyone may read, and also with a seventeenth-century mystery which, strange to say, is known to no one in Great Britain but myself. As to the first, Mrs. Thrale herself of the historic North Welsh house of Salusbury was born in it and inherited the property in middle life, the Bodvels having disappeared long before. Further interest is given to her first visit here as owner in that Samuel Johnson accompanied her, and that ponderous sage jumped on the upstair floors to see if they were sound—a tolerable test!—and, if memory serves me, made opprobrious and characteristic remarks on the house and its surroundings.

The Doctor had been mightily impressed by the Welsh castles, and declared that one of them contained as much material as all those he had seen in Scotland put together.

Now for the mystery! In the year 1900 I had a letter from an American who had read in print some allusions of mine to Bodvel. He signed himself Bodwell, stating that they had formerly spelt their name Bodvel, but in that carelessness of speech so common in old colonial days, and so likely in this particular instance, had shifted the v to w. But this was of slight significance. My correspondent was obviously a well-educated man of good position, living in one of those little New England towns that contain many such. He still possessed and lived upon the same property which his ancestor from Wales had purchased about the year 1700. He went on to relate that ever since those days a story had been cherished in their family that this same ancestor, who came out as a boy, had been swindled out of his inheritance in Wales by a stepfather, a guardian, or some such malevolent intruder in authority over him. That he had been shipped out to New England with a skipper and placed with a farmer—a by no means uncommon method of getting rid of inconvenient children in those days. They couldn't return like the undesirable or at least undesired of modern times! My American was not inspired with any foolish "claimant" notions, but only by very natural curiosity which my allusion to the place and name had aroused. For it was natural enough that no whisper of it from this remote Welsh-speaking land of Lleyn had reached the ears of these untravelled provincial Americans through all the ages.

In brief, he asked me if I would institute inquiries for him in the proper quarters as to this little family mystery. I was ready enough to do this much, as it took my fancy, and set an expert Carnarvonshire genealogist of my acquaintance on the trail. He tracked the property to a widow Bodvel in possession with a young son towards the close of the seventeenth century. The boy, sure enough, disappeared from the record without any note of decease, though a second husband turns up in it of rather higher position, whose name I forget, but who possessed a larger estate elsewhere, into which Bodvel was apparently merged. And that was all there was "to it", as my American friend would have expressed it. But that little, to say the least of it, was uncommonly significant. I took out a photographer from Pwllheli at my correspondent's request, and in a bitter March east wind we photographed the rather uninspiring house amid its shivering, naked trees, and I have no doubt the result is treasured by the descendants of what really does seem, having regard to their persistent tradition, to have been the kidnapped heir.

We were soon over the five miles of smooth road to Pwllheli, which busy little seaport town, I trust, had no speed limit! There is quite a large built-in harbour here for a town of under 4000 souls, while away out beyond it lies the magnificent stretch of sand, along which the modern watering-place is built. No frequented sea-front even in Wales has such a sublime prospect. For it looks straight across the top corner of Cardigan Bay, where, at a ten- to fifteen-mile distance, the whole coast range from Cader Idris on the south along the Rhinogs to the Snowdon mountains seems to fall right into the sea, so little evidence is there from here of the low-lying strip along their feet. With Harlech Castle, too, upon its high rock in the centre of the picture and the peak of Snowdon on its northern limits, some idea may be formed of this majestic scene. But there was nothing of all this to-day, as we sped through the streets of the old town amid the first splashes of what proved to be a drenching night. When some five miles on we crossed the old bridge which spans the impetuous and beautiful Dwyfawr River at Llan-y-stymdwy, Mr. Lloyd George's early home, it was pouring, and when soon after we passed the lodge gate of his present abode and hurtled on through Criccieth, Cadwallader's blood was well up, and I remember nothing more till the little car pulled up at our hotel door at Beddgelert.

The next morning found us at Criccieth again, under lowering but not yet leaking skies. Cadwallader had not long before discovered St. Gibby's Well at Llangibby, and was enthusiastic about it. I blush to admit, though by way of knowing this Eivionyd country pretty well in past days, this ancient shrine had somehow escaped me. Yet it proved to be the most complete and interesting of the kind I have seen in Wales. The Glaslyn was "up" a bit after the night's rain, as we passed down to the Aberglaslyn gorge, and two or three locals were flogging it for salmon. The mountain-shadowed high road along the edge of the Traethmawr to Tremadoc, its fine over-arching timber and snug country houses perched above, amid a riot of leaf and colour, the grey crags notching the high sky-line, and just now prinked out with early blossoming heather, is always a joy to travel.

As we left Tremadoc and its bigger offspring, Portmadoc, and the wide Traethmawr behind us, we rose into the confused picturesque country skirting the northern foot of Moel Gest, to drop down beyond into the Criccieth portion of Eivionyd. As we went gently along—for we were out prospecting—the old familiar road, the sites of many ancient houses, in this direction or in that, since vanished or represented betimes by modest homesteads of later date, awakened many memories. They are not mentioned in guide-books, for such references would be meaningless to any who had not read that priceless story of his own and more particularly of his father's and grandfather's times, by that already-spoken-of Elizabethan worthy, Sir John Wynne of Gwydir. The same keen sense of observation which made Sir John so enterprising in his own day, made him alert to realize those of his forbears, and he left behind him an unequalled picture of the things that are not found in histories, assuredly not in Welsh histories.

For when Henry VII came to the throne, fulfilling thereby the old Welsh prophecies and restoring Welsh self-respect, all this cantref of Eivionyd and doubtless much more was seething with family feuds of the most ferocious kind: scarcely a house in Carnarvonshire but had its dreadful tale. Sir John's grandfather, owner of Cesail Gyferch in this country, though quite a big man in it and reasonably fond of a scrap, could stand it no longer. He shook its dust off his feet, purchased an estate on the upper Conway valley, then full of robbers and outlaws and the most dangerous region in Wales. He preferred fighting outlaws, he replied to his friends' remonstrances, to fighting kinsmen and neighbours, and if he remained in Eivionyd he would have either to kill or be killed by his relations, which was not his ideal of rural society—in times of peace at any rate. From the lips or the notes of his immediate forbears Sir John has left an amazing description of the social amenities of Carnarvonshire. When here last I had a fancy for hunting out all these scenes of neighbourly fighting and burning out, given in such wealth of detail by Sir John, whose work I need hardly say doesn't figure on bookstalls or in tourist literature.

Cesail Gyferch has left no trace. It was first burnt " to cold coals ", which smouldered, it was said, for two years, by Glyndwr, in comparatively legitimate warfare, and again at the time when Sir John's grandfather wearied of his sanguinary relations. Many of the others remain in some form or other scattered all about the country—Cefn-y-fan, Bron-y-foel, Ystymcegid, and others whose names I have forgotten—all obscure, forgetting and forgotten, peaceful and pastoral, and looking so utterly unconscious of the scenes they witnessed in the days of old, the turmoil that raged about them, the swords that clashed, the fire that flamed, the blood that ran over the floors. But I have told of them at some length elsewhere, and maybe it is a fad of mine. I don't think even the natives worry much about it, though Sir John has given them such an illuminating picture of their ancestors, and I am quite sure the summer visitors don't. But one or two of those scenes of carnage have not lost their rank, and are still well known of men. Here, for instance, just as we are passing out of this tangled upland towards the hill-top above Criccieth, a dark avenue opens on to the road. At the far end of it lies Ystymllyn, with a fairly bloody past. But it is still an engaging old house with a good deal of Jacobean and Queen Anne traces of gentle occupation. But times had changed ; Sir John declares that the ferocious ancients he tells of, though all had wine-cellars, never drank to excess like those of his own day. Their great-grandchildren, however, peaceable as lambs in daily conduct, made up for it by a hearty devotion to the bottle. Two or three Ellises of Ystymllyn, so their records tell, " were killed by falls from their horses after carousing at Pwllheli market ".

The view of Criccieth from the top of the long hill approaching it is most effective. The ruined castle, with little more than its gateway towers left, stands out into the sea upon its high rock. The old part of the little town snuggles by its small harbour behind it, while the south coast of Lleyn spreads away to its horizon. It is an ancient Welsh castle this, but rebuilt by Edward I, which precaution, no doubt, enabled it to hold out against Glyndwr. But it had at any rate been strong enough before for a Prince of Gwynedd to keep a dangerous rival quiet within its walls for many years. For Gryffydd, the father of the last Llewelyn, was mistrusted by his half-brother Dafydd, the then reigning Prince, for the sufficiently old reason of their fraternal relationship, just as the victim's son was later on to immure his brother, the Red Owen, in Dolbadarn. As in his case, too, the Welsh nobles and bishops petitioned the Prince in vain to release his prisoner. The threats of Henry III were more effective, particularly as he promised to take Gryffydd back to London and keep him there. The King more than kept his word, for he locked the unfortunate Prince up in the Tower together with his young son (the hapless Owen Goch).

Though it was an honourable, well-fed captivity, and much more comfortable than the windy tower at Criccieth, the captive so wearied in time of his luxurious prison that he made a bold bid for liberty. For supplied with materials by his wife from outside, he extemporized a rope, and proceeded to let himself down from the window. But he didn't realize how fat he had grown with good living and lack of exercise, and the frail support gave way, precipitating him into the moat below and breaking his neck. The body was carried back to Conway and buried in state. It is strange that his boy son, who assisted his father in this fatal enterprise, should himself spend much of his life in captivity, and also through a brother's jealousy. So wagged the world, in Wales at any rate in the thirteenth century. A later occupant of Criccieth had quite another story. This was Hywel ap Fywel, or Hywel-of-the-pole-axe, a gentleman of Herculean stature and prodigious courage, who had whacked off the head of the French king's horse at Poitiers with one swipe of his axe. For this memorable achievement Edward III made him Constable of Criccieth with a good salary. The pole-axe was granted to the doughty hero as his coat-of-arms, and may be seen to-day in the quarterings of many Welsh families. Yet more, it was decreed that after his death a dish of meat should be served daily by eight yeomen before the pole-axe set up in the castle, and Pennant says the custom was kept up for two hundred years—possibly succeeding constables saw to that!

Making for Llangibby, we turned out of the high road beyond Criccieth a bit too soon; Cadwallader having only been there once was a little at fault. For the country hereabouts is flat for Wales, and almost uninteresting. Moreover, it is a perfect labyrinth of unposted lanes and by-roads. And we got entangled in them badly. Only an occasional group of school children broke their solitude, and a Welsh-speaking urchin struggling with his or her tags of school English proved of no avail in this emergency. Besides, Llangibby was about four miles off as the crow flies, and all across the grain of main traffic. I think with all the tracing and retracing of our steps we must have covered at least fifteen miles before we got there! I have always noticed that my motoring friends take chances on such occasions, unlike the pedestrian and even the cyclist, for obvious reasons more cautious in such adventure. Still, I had no objection whatever to turning and twisting about these lanes and recalling bits of them here and there that I had compassed in former days. We passed the woods of Gwynfryn, the seat of the Nanneys, and the lodge gates, I think, several times. So I had ample time to recall the panic-stricken flight of Shelley, his family, and his trunks to its hospitable doors, the morning after the highly hysterical night at Tan-yr-allt. I remembered also the lively part taken by the then owner, Gryffydd ap Gronow, in the smoking out of Howel of Bron-y-foel on the slopes of Moel Gest. He had much experience of sieges in the continental wars, and reckoned this an easy task. They burned the outbuildings and filled the manor-house with smoke. But the tough old Howel, though half suffocated, held out nobly, and, what is more, shot Gryffydd dead with an arrow from a window. So all ended happily, except the outbuildings.

Close to Criccieth too, is, or rather was, Aberkin, where another sanguinary scrap took place, in which its owner, Howel ap Madog Vaughan, lost his life. The ladies were evidently present, no doubt to hearten up their friends. For when Howel fell, his mother clapped her hand upon the wound, and from a second blow lost three fingers and something more. When the dying Howel saw his mother's fingers fly, he abjured her never to forgive the striker. She never did, and being on the winning side, she locked him up for seven years at Aberkin, whence only her own death and burial released him. The dust of this vigorous Amazon lies somewhere in Llanystymdwy churchyard. Sir John Wynne's uncle, a relative of the slain Howel, told him he well remembered as a boy being sent over to Aberkin to inquire after his cousin. He found him "laid on the bed, the wounded men in great numbers lying on a long bed or a cocherie above the degree, near the high table, all in breadth of the Hall, all gored and wallowing in their blood". Likewise he saw the milk cows brought to the door and the milk carried hot to the wounded for restoring their blood.

At long last we made a good shot, and hit off the little village of Llangibby, a cluster of old cottages and a modern-looking grey stone church which, though in part old, did not seem worth an internal inspection, particularly as it had begun to rain briskly. Cadwallader knew the way to the well, and crossing the churchyard we descended into a small valley, crossed a narrow strip of boggy land and a clear rippling brook by a causeway, obviously an original portion of the sacred precincts. The latter stood at the base of the wood-clad hill opposite. It consisted of two ancient, roofless chambers contrived of large blocks of stone, and entered by a narrow, slightly arched door, the one with fireplace and chimney, the other containing the well or bath of limpid water, surrounded by a stone platform with recessed seats. There was nothing but the antiquity of this fairly perfect old building and the quiet seclusion of the spot, together with its fame in ancient days, to detain us very long in the rain.

But a word must be said of its story, and, first, of St. Gybi himself. St. Cybi or Gybi, born about A.D. 510, was of both royal and saintly stock, for his father was Solomon, king of Cornwall, and his mother an aunt of St. David. At twenty-seven he left the Court of Cornwall, wherever that may have been, and started out quite in the fashion of a modern prince to travel for some time on the Continent. When he returned to Cornwall, much had happened. King Solomon was dead, his brother had succeeded him and in turn been deposed by Constantine. Gybi's return stirred things up again, and an attempt was made to seat him on the throne, but it failed; and the rightful heir, if there was such a thing then, had to fly for his life accompanied by faithful adherents, his decrepit and deposed uncle among them, who was a terrible strain on Gybi's loyalty and drag on his movements. Having tried Glamorgan, which didn't suit them or they it, the uncle and nephew crossed to Ireland, and abode on the Isle of Aran, and remained there in the house of the island prophet, St. Enda, for four years.

Uncle Cyngan, however, could now swallow nothing more solid then milk, so the faithful nephew bought him a cow, which proved so regardless of boundaries that it brought about such a serious row with the neighbours that Gybi once more started on his travels, apparently leaving the uncle and his cow behind him with the good St. Enda. He then went to Dublin and took coracle for Wales. But the wickerwork boat was cast upon the rocks of Lleyn. Gybi got ashore, found his way to the healing spring that now bears his name, and as a thank-offering founded a church here. Maelgwyn, king of Gwynneth in the meantime, the most outstanding prince of early Welsh history, was hunting in Lleyn one day, and a goat that he was pursuing dashed into Gybi's cell, which brought about an introduction with the erstwhile Prince of Cornwall, now a saint. Maelgwyn, anything but immaculate himself, if memory serves me, at least knew a good man when he saw one, and made him a present of the Caer at Holyhead, where the saint now set up house, or rather cell. To this day Holyhead is known as Caergybi by the Welsh, and George Borrow rolled it round his tongue all the time he was in Anglesey. There is a contemporary statue of him in Holyhead Church which gives him a head exactly the shape of a turnip, instead of the shapely crown he no doubt showed to the world of his day. There is more of his later life. But having brought him to Llangibby there is neither occasion nor space to follow him to those further honours and adventures in Anglesey which the panic of a wild goat, where we are now standing, so fortuitously secured for him.

A treatise lies before me, published in 1767, by a learned medical man on "The Medicinal Properties of the Mineral Waters of Llangybi in Carnarvonshire". There is in it a long list of Jones', Williams', and Davis', of all ages and both sexes, whose cures from various ailments have been inquired into and verified by this industrious M.D. Obviously the poor people of Carnarvonshire and the neighbouring counties came here in shoals. Blindness from small-pox is the most popular of these maladies, and there are several wonderful cures of it related, even when of many years' standing. "Wild warts" of uncanny size vanished, too, before the treatment of these healing waters. The halt and the maimed came here, to depart sound and rejoicing in a few weeks. With pathetic optimism the author thinks it may prove a cure for cancer, and is sanguine enough to foretell the day when sufferers from all parts of England will crowd to this now forlorn and solitary place.

We found some old almshouses by the church and half a dozen ancients within them, who invited us in to see their quarters. But they were not bi-linguists, and we couldn't get very far with them. At the village shop and post office, however, we found a highly enlightened and communicative lady, with whom we had a tremendous gossip. She told us, among other things, that a good many local people—she, I think, among them—had benefited by the water.

We made no mistake this time about the road, and were in Llanystymdwy in about ten minutes as it seemed to me, and in Criccieth in under twenty, though we stopped a moment at Llanystymdwy to read the inscription on the cottage home of Mr. Lloyd George's early days. What an amazing career it is! No Welshman since Cromwell (*alias* Williams) has gone so far. Yet no one besides his biographers ever seem to notice that his father's people were Pembrokeshire farmers, and that his father himself, after a scholastic life in England, returned to end his days a Pembrokeshire farmer. That would mean nothing to English readers, who would seldom be aware that the southern half of that noble but little known county is practically as English as Wiltshire, and occupied for seven centuries by people of English or kindred blood or descent, who have not, nor ever had, a word of Welsh, but speak a variety of southern English—" Little England beyond Wales," in short. I know the county pretty well, though I cannot remember precisely what part of it the George family came from, whether the " Welshery " or " Englishry ". But a " George " hailing from Pembrokeshire, as a Celtic Welshman by descent, seems on the face of it a contradiction in terms. Even a Carnarvonshire mother and Carnarvonshire rearing can hardly obliterate an Anglo-Pembroke paternal stock.

I was loth to bid adieu next morning to Snowdon, to Beddgelert, to my quarters and its occupants, above all to Cadwallader, and not least to the Boots. That the last performed his primary duty I had sufficient evidence, but it must have been a mere passing interlude in his giddy day. I suppose motors have transformed the Boots of tradition, who lurked in back quarters at call, into an outdoor athlete. This one, at any rate, spent his days in the road before the hotel, apparently in charge of the motor traffic from all the ends of the land—shouting and waving directions to impatient chauffeurs, sprinting this way and that when appealed to, and no doubt, inserting a word in season to the wavering as to the best place for lunch or a drink. But it wasn't on this account that I was sorry to leave him, though his nimbleness aroused my admiration. But it was in the evening hours, when the coast was all cleared and all was still that he would draw up to our little company in the porch, and discuss the credibility of the Arthurian tradition, and recall local legends. Or he would speculate on Glyndwr's wanderings in these parts, inspired perhaps by the Ogaf Owen, easily visible from here near the summit of Hebog, where the hero found passing refuge from his pursuers. Indeed, the young man himself was the son of a small farmer on this noble mountain slope. Fancy the Boots at a Malvern inn discussing Piers Plowman, or a Kent villager reading Chaucer. Evan, too, I feel sure, wrote poetry. But here he would gather prestige from any reasonable endeavours at it. Such a freak in Sussex would only get ridicule from his fellows.

CHAPTER XVI

MACHYNLLETH AND THE LLYFNANT VALLEY

HARLECH CASTLE looked very different from what it did on my last glimpse of it, so did the Rhinog mountains. Barmouth estuary, as we rumbled over the long bridge, reminded me of that memorable day of really high summer a fortnight back. The heather was now in full bloom on tufted island, on bosky shore, and on the mountain-side. We passed in due course round the headland by which the outermost point of the Cader range drops into the sea. The line overhangs the latter for a space, being cut out of the cliff. I remember when it used to make the nervous tremble, and not unnaturally, as a whole train had not long before gone over the edge! Passing some little villages in woody glens which bring down brooks rejoicing to the sea, we were soon traversing the wide Morfa Towyn. Through its shallow, sprawling estuary the Dysanni River flows to its rapid outflow on the shore.

The little watering-place, which began to tack on to the old village of Towyn some fifty years ago, has made quite a small town of it. A few more stark villas and lodging-houses have been added to the visitors' quarter near the railway and along the flat shore since I last saw it. St. Cadvan's old cruciform Norman church stands up half a mile inland, with the straggling town between us. The Dysanni valley, a mile wide, runs far inland and seems to press right up against Cader, which forms the pivotal point whence two mountain ranges draw towards us almost to the sea. The bleak-looking villas by the low, rather dull stretch of shore, beloved of old and doubtless still beloved by the spade-and-bucket brigade, matter nothing; for everything else about the neighbourhood is beautiful. Moreover, it is the most bracing strip in Wales away from the north coast.

To be sure, my ancient affection for Towyn may conceivably bias my judgment! And by Towyn I do not mean the town and shore, but everything else, south, north, and east. A toy railroad runs up the valley to Tal-y-llyn, as we took note of when up there. It gives access, by the way, to many delectable scenes for the walker and hill climber, if there be any such left. A fair number of sewin, too, used to come up the river in August and September when the water served. They, no doubt, do so still, if the nets allow it.

I wondered in passing whether the village cricket club still played the visitors every summer. Not many of us have played cricket in Welsh, but the Towyn XI had in those days no English, and it was rather thrilling hearing its captain shout to his field in the tongue of the ancient Britons. We visitors were always more or less the same side, as the same people went to Towyn every summer. On a normal pitch we should have vanquished the locals every time. But they generally beat us, for they were inured to the wicket, which was the most fearsome I ever played upon or ever saw—far the most fearsome. It was simply in a state of rugged nature. Every batsman visitor went to the wicket with dread and left it with relief, for the Towyn youths, like most rustics in those days, bowled as fast as ever they could. The Saturday afternoon match was always finished before time; no return game was possible, as we refused to face the music twice in one summer,—only in the next season, when time had softened its memories.

A few of us again paralysed natives and visitors alike even in the earlier 'eighties by golfing over the Morfa, which, like a voice in the wilderness, was crying aloud to be made into the first and best golf-course in Wales. Not a ball had been struck or a club seen anywhere else in the Principality in those days. Towyn lost its great chance. Aberdovey, next door, had in the same dim days a chiel or two taking notes, and captured the position. I noted in passing that Towyn, in belated fashion, had started a club of sorts on our old course, from which they could have commanded all Wales in the 'eighties, and laid up for themselves treasures upon earth and built a handsome little town as well—as witness Aberdovey, just round the headland!

Since I last saw it, a whole quarter of quite attractive residences has sprung up on the once bare foot-hill above the links.

But, in truth, I have strayed rather off my own course on these reminiscent trails. Aberdovey with its river, running out through its tidal waters, its fishing-boats and wharves, is a picturesque little port of itself. Then, of course, to round off its character are those bells which have managed somehow or other to ring round the world and down the ages. For Aberdovey Church has only possessed bells within living memory. This, however, gives people who have run up against that disappointing fact, almost more diversion in trying to guess what the Bells of Aberdovey could have been, whether the song of mermaids or the laughter of girls. Across the river-mouth, half a mile perhaps of sands and racing tides, a longer stretch of marsh spreads to the luxuriant Cardigan shore, which falls back to hills and from hills yet farther to groups of mountains. Again, looking up the river along its tidal reaches, it is enough that mountain ranges, near or far, fill the sky on every quarter.

The train runs some miles up the estuary, to cross just where the actual river opens into it, and deposits us at one of those junctions which live in the memory of old travellers in West Wales. We all know them. Every district in Britain has some such name of dread. But an hour at Glandovey junction has compensations denied to the weary waiter at Bletchley or Ashford. On a fine summer day I, at any rate, would lift no voice against—I was going from sheer force of habit to say the Cambrian railroad. What whirlwinds and tornados of abuse has not the old Cambrian endured through the ages! But I haven't yet mastered the new combination, and forget under what name that beautiful line from Aberystwith to Shrewsbury is labelled. It was a gorgeous evening as I paced the long platform of the junction. Every mountain peak—and there was a great array of them in many directions—was of a tender blue, part shadowed, and all displayed with singular clarity against the sky. The whole lower levels of vale and foot-hill were aglow with an almost unearthly verdure, from recent rains, lit up by a westering sun streaming in from the sea.

Having duly watched the crowded train from London to Aberystwith and its emptier fellow returning eastward, a "local" eventually set me down half a dozen miles away at Machynlleth. This is a really nice, well-built little town, speaking broadly, of T-shape, with a handsome open space at the cross and a long, wide street planted with trees trailing eastwards up the valley. A restored old church of some dignity, with a large, well-shaded graveyard, completes its tale. Upon the south side, the parklands of Plâs Machynlleth[1] adjoin the town from end to end, its fine timber brushing the very tops of the houses in the street. The park itself is overhung at close quarters by the first ridge of the wild mountains that roll back southward to Plynlimmon ten miles away, and then from Plynlimmon on without a break twenty to thirty miles farther yet, into South Wales and the Vale of Towy. North of Machynlleth in a flat meadowy vale, half a mile in average width, the Dovey, some distance now above touch of tide, coils its clear streams—though in darker shades of brown or amber at this wet season. For all the brooks and rills and bogs in the mountains were now in almost chronic agitation: everything was bubbling or sparkling all over the country. Whirling round corner pools, lipping the grassy rim of ruddy banks, or shimmering with ample current over gravelly shallows, the Dovey beats its way down the vale, as perfect a sewin and salmon river to behold as in all Wales. And if it isn't all it looks to be, the poaching quarrymen may be debited with the fact. Slaughtering fish with dynamite and engines should be made a crime against the State—for such it is. It is not poaching merely, it is robbing the community at large, a foul and mean business. They have, I think, almost stopped it on the Wye. But the Wye-side Bench are nowadays made of stiffer stuff than the magistrates of Merioneth have shown themselves to be in this direction ever since I can remember.

Half-way down the long street is a good-sized building of old design but recent date. This stands on the spot where in 1403 Glyndwr held his first formal Parliament or Council. The original building was a modest, half-timbered house, little considered till it collapsed from old age a few years ago, when it was replaced by this much more imposing one. It was erected, of course, in memory of the hero, some of the materials of its predecessor being inserted. It serves civic purposes such as library, reading and other rooms. Owen summoned hither four members from every cantref in Wales, when such could be found able or willing to get here. The occasion is also memorable for the presence of Dafyd ap Howel, otherwise " Davy Gam ", the red-haired, squint-eyed Brecon warrior, notorious in his day and of notable memory in Wales even at this one. He had been esquire to John of Gaunt and through him grown much attached to Henry of Bolingbroke. Feigning to have changed his opinion, he now came to Machynlleth with the intention of killing Glyndwr. His courage and loyalty at any rate were uncommon, for almost certain death must have awaited either success or failure. But his plan was discovered. He was seized and doomed to the cruel death inevitable to such occasions. Luckily for him he had some powerful friends present, who with some difficulty commuted his execution for imprisonment. He had his fill of this, however: nine years of it, mostly in the tower of Dolbadarn at Llanberis. For in that grim fortress alone one could fancy it possible for Owen to have kept his grip on Davy. It was not till 1412 that the King and other great people—for Davy was a favourite—at last got him out of the Snowdon mountains, to put a seal on his loyalty to Henry IV and to fall gloriously by his sons' side at Agincourt, together with his cousin, Roger Vychan. One of them is supposed to have sat for Shakespeare's " Fluellen ".

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[1] The Marquis of Londonderry.

Machynlleth has strong points of attraction, though I don't think many tourists stay there, with the coast towns so near. For one thing, it opens straight out of its main street into wild hills which very soon merge into something bigger, with Plynlimmon rising at their backs. I went there for the purpose of having a look at this country. I was familiar enough with Plynlimmon itself and all to the south and east of it, but this wild tract lying between it and the Dovey, which I had so often overlooked from the famous old mountain's brow, had so far evaded, though often fascinating me, from afar. But alas!

the rain came on again, and grievously hampered my activities. The Devil's Bridge near Aberystwith was another of my objectives, and I was lucky in snatching for it a single day of lovely sunshine. Here again I had been at fault. For I had long ago fastened on some notion that the Reidol, whose head waters I did know, was probably creating sufficient agitation down below to give point to excursions from Aberystwith, and that was about all. I got the surprise of my life, and will confess to it later.

The " W—— Arms " at Machynlleth, planted in the quite open heart of the town, is a roomy, old-fashioned, comfortable, but unpretentious house of the Quarter-Sessions type. I had once slept there after being served a worse trick than usual by Glandovey junction and there turned out into the night with neither bag nor baggage. Luckily the memory of the mishap was so dim that I could face the scene again with equanimity. The only other guests in the house were a fishing party that had come there apparently for unnumbered years, so the atmosphere altogether was thoroughly conservative. I might add that the Dovey now belongs to a club.

Fishing is quite a nice occupation in rain with the possibilities it so often brings, but climbing mountains in the wet is senseless, even for the youngest among us. But the hills being so close I got in a good many mild climbs between showers, up to the 1000-foot level more or less. Even then the air cleared quickly and was at times almost abnormal in visibility.

One looked across to the mountain range that from the Arans stretched right down to the sea at Aberdovey, including Cader, which shows its finest profile at this point. A very little way uphill behind Machynlleth gives you all this to great advantage, with the whole winding vale of the Dovey up to the heights of Dinas Mawddwy besides. There were no tourists about on these lonely hills ; scarcely any even in Machynlleth. Probably August, though right upon us, might make some difference, but I fancy the seacoast always claims most of them. These hills are on the western edge of Montgomeryshire, adjoining Cardigan. We are here in the old land of Cyfeiliog which gave his title to the princely author of the " Hirlas Horn ", while just across to the south-west lies *Arwystli*, an old sub-province of Powys, when Powys could keep it. But running off here from Machynlleth to Llanidloes, so famous for its hill-mutton, at which place the Hafren, Clwedog, and Dulas all unite to form the upper Severn, is a road bad to travel but beautiful in its fifteen miles or so of wild and mountain scenery. This was another of my disappointments. I have been on bits of it, just enough to believe all that friends have told me of the rest. Few people know it, and if the road is bad for cars, few are now ever likely to.

But back in the heart of this block of mountains, just behind Machynlleth, though but five or six miles distant, is the Pistyll Llyn, otherwise the Cwm Rhayader Falls (in Central Wales Rhaiadr is thus anglicized): the last being the name of a romantic mountain valley containing an exquisitely situated and sequestered country house, of which I had heard much and often. Its owners were reported still in town, but as my time was shortly up, I set out on foot, upon the first fine day, to take my chance and see what I could. Climbing the hill to the west of the town, I had the long Dovey valley and all the mountains round about its winding course glowing in the morning sun. Striking a lane, I crossed the hill-top, and from there, a couple of miles down a little valley which lay straight ahead of me, I could see the half-open mouth of a glen on its winding way from the seacoast. I had looked down on all this country on my recent rambles and now recognized the trail of the famous Llyfnant valley of which indeed Cwm Rhayader is but the fountain-head. I had hoped and indeed expected here to see Plynlimmon right ahead of me. But though it was only six or seven miles away, the mountains, heaping up all about in front of me though only of some 1700 to 1800 feet, persistently obscured their sovereign lord. For Plynlimmon is in truth all that. Though not very high and not very distinguished in shape, it is the heart and centre as well as the highest of a mountain tract extending from the Dovey to the Towy and covering several hundred square miles. From its midway position, too, it commands an outlook in some respects as striking as Cader Idris and Snowdon. For it looks into nearly all South

PISTYLL-Y-LLYN, LLYFNANT VALLEY

Wales, as well as commanding all the northern mountains and the whole of Cardigan Bay. And it may be again as well to remind the reader that South Wales is only a degree less beautiful than North Wales, and incidentally possesses shapely mountains within a few feet of the height of Cader and a good deal higher than Plynlimmon.

On reaching the Llyfnant valley, I found it had become here but a deep dingle, draped with oak woods and girt about with varied foliage, amid which the lively waters of the stream danced upon the rocks. There was a bridge over the stream, and on the hither side of it a rustic cottage with a grass plot and a few chairs and tables, while an old lady beamed from the doorway. It was a really charming nook, and though I had some lunch in my pocket, I determined to purchase the further right to enjoy it in those green and murmurous shades. But just across the Llyfnant a sharp hill, or rather the butt end of a high ridge, rose straight up about 500 feet. Now I had a longing for many reasons, here irrelevant, to see old Plynlimmon again, and here surely, if anywhere, I should get a glimpse of him. I hesitated long, however. The sun for once was really hot and in this deep glen gave rather more than a good idea of summer. I am now, alas ! no great walker. Moreover, there was the Cwm Rhayader waterfall to be reached yet, and five or six miles home again afterwards over the hills. However, I decided for the climb. It was both rough and steep, and when accomplished I got no sight of Plynlimmon, but only a corner of what I think was Mynydd Heddgaint, a ridge to the south of it. It was on this mountain beside Plynlimmon that Glyndwr, early in his war, fought a fierce battle with a force of Anglo-Flemings who had come up from Pembrokeshire fifteen hundred strong to try and capture him. As Owen at the moment had only a third of that number with him, he had a narrow escape, cutting his way with difficulty through the hardy Flemings. This feat so raised his prestige as to influence a good deal his after career. I had a peep also from this toilsome hill-top down the lovely valley of the Llyfnant seaward, and again up its winding dingle to Cwm Rhayader house and grounds, whither I was bound.

I had almost a Snowdon thirst when I got down again to the haven below. I ate my lunch upon the little lawn beneath the shade and beside the stream as I had projected, while the old lady of the cottage plied me with something fizzy out of a glass bottle that tasted like nectar but was probably only indifferent ginger-beer. A gate here opened into a private road which led to Cwm Rhayader, two miles up the stream. A motor had gone up it, said the old woman, while I was on the hill, with two of the family in it, down for a night or two, she opined. This was great luck, as I wanted much to see the house, particularly the views from it, and it would be only anticipating an expected visit which an accident had made impossible. I had heard it was the most beautifully placed country house in Wales. I was wondering whether it could possibly exceed Pen-y-Craig of Llanrhaiadr—I am still wondering. However, as I am almost certainly the only person living who happens to have looked out from the windows of both—for neither are show places—I can defer judgment *sine die*.

A couple of miles up this road, cut into the face of a wooded hill, with the Llyfnant tumbling on the rocks below, brought me into view of both house and cataract. The former is most felicitously poised on what might be styled a natural pedestal backed by woods, at the parting of two valleys: one barely threaded, if memory serves me, by water at all, the other the glen of the Llyfnant. Into the head of this last, about a mile away, the Pistyll Llyn slides rather than leaps down bare rocky cliffs, parting two mountain summits, with a total fall from the mountain shelf to the valley below of many hundred feet. There is no woodland about it, and the contrast between the bare, rugged scene above, and the house and grounds and leafy profusion of the foreground, is very striking.

There had been arrivals, as the old lady who had plied me with ginger-beer at the cottage in the glen had announced. So I was fortunate, as it is from the front of the house, among lawns and flowers and shrubs, that the wild, wide mountain views, as always I think in such cases, show their best from contrast. The house itself is an enlargement of the original one effected seventy or eighty years ago, and I believe

PISTYLL-Y-LLYN FROM BELOW CWM RHAYADER

includes the whole shell of the ancient homestead. If the scene behind it is wild and stern, the front view, right down the woody windings of the Llyfnant valley, gives all the charm of contrast. Thanks to my disappointing climb at midday, I was grateful enough for a lift back to Machynlleth in the evening.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RHEIDOL VALLEY AND DEVIL'S BRIDGE

ONE wet morning, in the bookshop at Machynlleth, I listened to an instructive disputation on the merits of "Wild Wales" between two worthy citizens of the town. It was provoked by my allusion to a cheap reprint of that immortal work lying on the counter. The disputants were a leading tradesman of patriotic tendencies and a Wesleyan minister of more critical and literary tastes.

"I have no opinion whatever of Borrow," said the layman. "I consider that he libels the Welsh people all through his book. He makes them out a drunken, loafing lot of idlers and vagabonds."

"Come, come," said the little minister. "I am not with you there. No, no! Borrow, though he says some hard things which may have some truth in them, says also a great many nice things of us. I think upon the whole he is very fair. And then he writes so pleasantly."

"Oh yes, his writing no doubt is well enough," replied the other. "But nearly all the Welshmen he describes are drinking in public-houses, or pig-jobbers, horse-copers, tramps, and the like. He very seldom touches the decent side of Welsh life."

"Well, well, there is something in what you say. But Borrow's opinion of Welsh people as he saw them does not matter much, as he had neither time nor opportunity to judge of the Wales and the Welsh of his day. It does not much matter what he said or that he only saw in general one kind of person. But those wayside and tavern meetings were always amusing, whatever; and then again he could speak Welsh and knew more about our old literature than any Englishman I ever heard of. No! no! I think Borrow should have much more praise than blame from Welshmen."

"I don't agree with you," said the layman. "The book is a libel on our people. Speak Welsh! Funny Welsh it must have been—learned apparently out of a book in England! No, indeed, I have read enough of Borrow."

"Well, well," said the more literary cleric, "I do not think you take Borrow in the right way; no, indeed! He did not come to study our people as they are to-day. He came to enjoy our beautiful scenery and visit the scenes of famous events that he had read about long ago in his Welsh studies, and also to see the birthplaces and homes of the old bards which he really knew a great deal more about than do most Welshmen. The vagrants and vagabonds along the roadside were the sort that interested Borrow most in all countries wherever he was, and it is natural enough that he saw most or wrote most about this class of people in Wales. I agree with you that his Welsh must have been funny stuff, and I cannot quite believe that he was understood so readily as he makes out. Still, that is nothing, for he wrote a good book. Yes, yes! it is a good book and indeed I always much enjoy it."

"Well, I don't," said the other bluntly, "though no doubt, as you say, it is a clever work."

Addressing the Borrovian—if any Welshman can be truly styled a Borrovian in the current meaning of the term—I said that he must have noticed an amazing colloquial blunder that Borrow perpetrated right through the book, in that he makes all the humble Welshmen who discoursed with him address him as "yer honour".

"Yes, indeed," said the minister. "No Welshman ever thinks or ever did think of using that Irish mode of addressing a superior. It is a truly astonishing blunder in a man who had so quick an ear for languages and dialects."

I have spoken of the Devil's Bridge and my determination to see it, even if the three days left to me were all pouring wet, though I had then little idea of its full significance. The first two were utterly impossible, but the third and last broke and set in sunshine. Indeed, it was a really hot summer day, and took the world, our world at any rate, quite by surprise.

Now from Machynlleth to Aberystwith is about twenty miles by rail, and the line hugs the coast all round that north-west corner of Cardiganshire which forms the southern curve of the broad Dovey estuary. Vast flats of lonely pasture and marshland stretch seaward from the railway, as skirting the hill country it makes the great sweep from Glandovey round to Borth, whence it dives inland through a hilly, picturesque, pastoral region to Aberystwith. At Borth the sea returns from the far fringes of marshes and comes back to the foot of the hill country to lap upon the beach. It is a dull-looking little place. Its only tradition is a modern and exotic one, to wit, the descent upon it in their hundreds of Uppingham School in the 'seventies under the heroic Dr. Thring, for a year or two during some building interlude at home. It made a great stir in its day as a masterpiece of academic energy, resource, and organization.

The railroad, as I have said, leaves the sea at Borth, deflected by a bolder coast, and runs to Aberystwith through a pleasant country of hills, streams, and pastoral forms, backed on the east by the mountains of the Plynlimmon range. One approaches Aberystwith across the wide valley of the Rheidol which, united just below with the Ystwith, forms the harbour. The station is quite outside and behind the town, while the little railway that goes back and forth to the Devil's Bridge starts not far from it. I had no thought of revisiting the town. For one thing, there was no time; moreover, as a popular watering-place, though with every advantage such places have and with more attractive scenery round it than most, it has no particular attraction for me. But as a university town it has, of course, special claims, particularly in Wales where education is spelt with such a very large E. Moreover, the National Library, with its invaluable accumulation of old Welsh books and MSS., is here. Assuredly the lot of the Welsh youths and maidens grappling with the things of the mind is cast in pleasant places: the waves of the western sea between its rocky headlands and far-away blue capes almost lap their classroom doors. Mountains, woods, and tumbling waters fill in their background. And who with any particle of feeling would not sooner study in such an atmosphere, or in that of academic centres such as Bangor, Brecon, Llandovery, or Lampeter—all equally uplifting—than at Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol, or Cardiff—and the Welsh are a romantic and imaginative people. In truth, young Wales is not a little to be envied in its academic life.

But Aberystwith is also a handsome, well-built, dignified seaside town and resort, not a mere haphazard disfigurement of the seashore like some of the smaller watering-places. Moreover, it is the metropolis of the "sweet shire of Cardigan", whose long crescent shape stretches southward like a bent bow whose loose string, roughly speaking, represents the coastline, and the bow itself the crescent range of mountains which cuts it off from the rest of Wales. Nowhere of startling beauty save at this upper, northern end, but almost everywhere quietly beautiful in its hills and streams, its bordering mountains and wild moorlands, its cosy farms and manor-houses, its unsmirched rural life, its old landed families still of stay-at-home habit who more often than anywhere speak the language of their long-seated tenantry. Where sportsmen still shoot their partridges as well as their grouse over pointers and setters, a land into which no tourists or strangers to speak of ever penetrate. Whose very people are regarded by Welshmen as almost a breed to themselves, as "Cardies"—in short, at once canny, thrifty, and unsophisticated. The land of "pigs and parsons", as the saying has it, where the ambition of every farmer has been to have a son in the Church, or at least a minister or schoolmaster. Nor do I suppose has the Great War materially altered its character.

But Aberystwith is almost too cosmopolitan and perhaps too remote to affect the real Cardiganshire, those pleasant places along the Vale of Aeron and by Teivyside. Moreover, till the war at any rate, the only railroad communication was of such leisurely and uncertain habit as even the old Cambrian R.R. could not vie with. It was styled the *Manchester and Milford*, and invited thereby much ribald criticism, since it had nothing whatever to do with either place! It was altogether a rather humorous line. The train would pull up by request, it used to be said, if it came to a good field of mushrooms. Its little stations were mostly and quite sufficiently manned by a solitary official who, dropping into casual habits from the irregularity of the service, was sometimes out fishing in the Teify when the train arrived. One of them, I remember, was an expert fisherman. On a notable occasion he was fast in a salmon close to the station when he ought to have been on the platform: all the passengers turned out to see him land it! But there are no longer such games as these, for the M. & M. long ago was absorbed by the G.W.R. By road you could only get out of this long county at the upper and lower horns of the crescent. Elsewhere, practically unroaded mountain wilderness barricaded it completely from the world beyond, which all, of course, made for its charm and character.

But this is not North Wales, while Aberystwith, though equally of the south, has, from the tourist point of view, strong northern affinities, and is reckoned as such in guide-books. But even as a summer resort it goes back pretty far. It will be remembered how all the chivalry of England took a summer holiday here under canvas in Owen Glyndwr's time, and the obstinate castle that fetched them all that long way still stands in ruins among well-tended grounds. But in a serious sense it was the first Welsh watering-place to become fashionable. Much more than a century ago, when Llandudno and Rhyl were obscure hamlets, Aberystwith was quite celebrated. During and even before the Napoleon wars, it became the haunt of honeymooners from far English counties—not of Joes and Jills, but persons of "the highest respectability", as Jane Austen would have said, whether by post-chaise, or the less exclusive coach which used to start from Cheltenham. These distinguished lovers of pre-Waterloo days must have gripped one another pretty close as the rough road, which leaves the Wye at Rhayader, climbed the rugged steeps of the mountain ridges beside leaping torrents, to follow, as in the form of a by-road it still follows, the lonely valley of the Elan up into the wilds of the Plynlimmon range. There must have been swooning and screaming enough at many a spot on that rough road, I warrant, in this era of " spleen " and " sensibility."

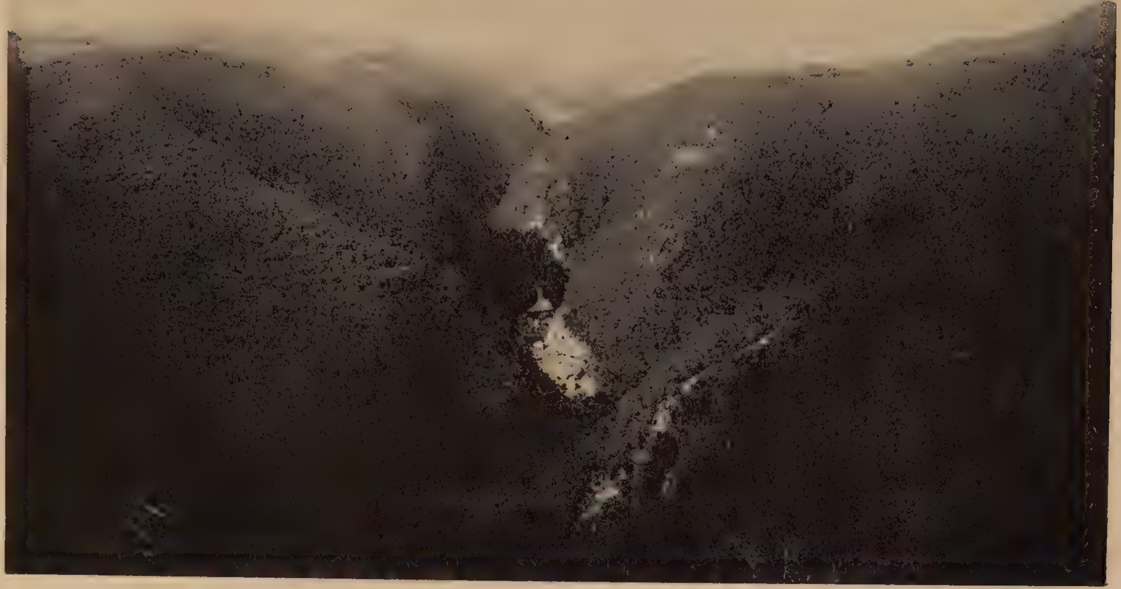
On this occasion, though it was some days yet to the August Bank Holiday, Aberystwith seemed full of tourists. At any rate, the little train waiting to start for the Devil's Bridge was well patronized. This was the same sort of toy railroad as that in which I had made such pleasant solitary pilgrimages about Snowdon. With a window-seat on the best side, the exuberant Midlanders around me were soon forgotten in the dramatic nature of the journey. For after crossing the lower waters of the Rheidol and travelling up its southern bank for four or five miles, the valley narrowed and the railway sidled up its steep southern slopes to a great height. The rapid river sparkled through narrow meadows far below, and the striking scenery began which culminated in the glories of the Devil's Bridge. As we edged along the verge of precipitous mountain slopes, hundreds of feet high, and crossed deep ravines by tortuous manœuvres, I admit it was comforting to remind oneself what long years this remarkable little line had been carrying its hundreds of thousands of passengers without a mishap. It may have been the thoughts of what such a thing would mean, or it may have been the majesty of the changing scenes we were passing through, but the rather vociferous crowd of the earlier moments now became as silent as if they were in church.

The sun shone brilliantly. The Rheidol, so far below us and still quite a good-sized river, paused here and there amid its shining coils to thunder in a cataract over craggy ridges or foam for a space around obstructing rocks. Beyond it rose the bare mountain, while on our side woods for the most part clothed the steeps. From the brink of these the train in time receded, and after traversing a woody plateau on the mountain-side, pulled up at its terminus. Here the road from Aberystwith, which had also ascended the valley, met us at the railroad terminus. A short walk along it, shut in by trees, ended in most sensational fashion. For passing suddenly out on to the broad, terraced area before the hotel, the screen of foliage suddenly gave way to reveal a perfectly gorgeous scene. For 500 feet below we saw the Rheidol, an almost straight streak of gleam and foam, running down to us from the northward between densely wooded cliffs, as high or higher than the lofty pinnacle on which we stood. Like a reversed ⅃, above the angle of which we were perched, the river turned beneath us to the westward. So for a mile up and about as far downward, we had a clear view of it raging in its narrow woody trough. It was hemmed in completely by these tremendous cliffs, to which oak and ash, birch, and deciduous trees of all kinds clung, covering them as with a radiant mantle of gay and verdant hues, sparsely sprinkled with the sombre note of pine or yew.

The Rheidol was at the moment in about half-flood, and for the mile up and the mile down visible from our high perch at the angle, there was no strand or shore anywhere to be seen. But the torrent was brushing the pendant woods on either hand and beating furiously against the cliffs to which they clung. One gathered the impression, upon that day at any rate, that if an unfortunate wight fell into the river where it first comes into view, what was left of him could not be fished out for a couple of miles or more. On his swift journey down, too, he would come over some Falls twenty or thirty feet high, which themselves make a brave show from up here in the raging river's mid-career.

Despite the reputation of the Devil's Bridge, so-called, I was quite unprepared for such a magnificent sweep of wooded cliffs, if you may call precipitous mountain-sides to which deciduous woods can cling like a garment, a cliff. Though hills and mountains rise away beyond it against the sky, it is this foreground of hanging woods and gleaming waters that seizes and delights the eye. I know nothing quite equal to it even in Wales, and assuredly not in England. In my first delight and surprise, too, I reminded myself that I had not stepped out on to that wonderful terrace after a journey from Sussex to Aberystwith, when one's sense of proportion might be reasonably dislocated and the imagination unduly excited by the sudden contrast, but I had been wandering for weeks amidst the finest scenery in Wales!

On our parapet here we were much below the summit of the wooded heights that push on above the river and form its eastern barrier. Wonderfully planted as was this hotel by its builders



THE RHEIDOL FROM THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE

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nearly a hundred years ago, whether by inspiration or accident, it is ideally placed for getting the very best of this transcendent scene. The cripple can enjoy it equally with the crag-climber. But you can descend if you please into the depths of this precipitous woodland by made-up paths, alternating with stone stairways. You can thus drop and climb up again hundreds of feet by another trail. I adventured so much, and came to the conclusion, on emerging once more into the high daylight, that it was not worth while, if economy of strength were of any value. For it was extremely exhausting down among the dense, airless foliage, for the day was really hot, and the sun powerful and no air stirring. Nevertheless, it is on just such days that the thunder of many waters—the voice, or, as it were, the echo of past tempests, all now hushed and vanished, is most effective.

Deep down in these wildwoods, following the rather awkward trails and stairways, the roar of the Rheidol below, with the thunder of the cataracts of the Mynach descending to it—of which a word presently—made noble music. But practically nothing is to be seen but a foreground of tangled woodland as you pursue these steep, laborious ways. They must have been fashioned nearly a hundred years ago, for they were no novelty when Borrow tested them and actually admitted that he was tired when he came up into the open again. He was here about the first of November, and the sole occupant of the rather imposing hotel built by the Duke of Newcastle, then owner of the property, some twenty odd years previously. A remarkable building, he declared, to find in this wild and lonely country. He stayed here two or three nights, and ate his solitary dinners and quaffed the ale, to which he gave his approval, by the window, that looked, and still looks, over the whole gorgeous scene, with the Falls of the Rheidol flashing in its centre. " As I looked from the window of the upper sitting-room of the hospice ", says Borrow, " the scene which presented itself was wild and beautiful to a degree, and in its midst shone the silver cataract of the Rheidol. Should I live a hundred years I shall never forget the wild fantastic beauty of that morning scene." Neither shall I!

Yet after all we have not yet seen the Devil's Bridge, which sounds cryptic, but in this case the greater sight is titularly included in the less, though indeed the latter is for itself quite worth the trip from Aberystwith, even if one walked all the way. But I doubt if that alone would have inspired the building of a costly hotel a century ago in this wild and lonesome country. Two or three hundred yards along the road leading into the mountains beyond the hotel, a bridge is thrown over a deep chasm in which, some 80 feet below, the Mynach River, or "river of the monk," chafes and plunges with much sound and fury. The stream is fresh from the neighbouring mountains, and urges its headlong way through rocky dingles to jump from here with many leaps into the Rheidol, 500 feet below. Beneath a modern metal bridge, which has carried the traffic of the last twenty years over the chasm, are two older ones—the upper, an ordinary stone arch of mid-eighteenth-century date; the lower, in which all interest centres, is of quaint Gothic shape, though a good deal restored. It is supposed, and doubtless truly, to have been built by the monks in the twelfth century for the benefit of pilgrims journeying southward to the great Abbey of Ystryd Flur, whose scanty remains still sanctify the infant waters of the Teify.

It is a deep, Gothic, single arch, this monkish one, and seemed no doubt a wonderful achievement to the local rustics of later days and anti-popery habit. By an almost natural process it was credited to the Evil One, who thus shares the district with the saintly souls who have given their names to most of the neighbouring parishes. But here again it is not this archæological curiosity, which can only be seen to advantage from the bottom of the ravine, that will keep the visitor lingering in its neighbourhood. A succession of stairways cut in the cliff beside this strange double bridge, or rather trio of bridges, leads down to the brink of the Mynach, which on this occasion at least was raging madly in the gorge beneath, towards the top of the several cataracts that leaped their way down into the depths far below, where the Rheidol was surging furiously, as Rheidolin herself might have raced on that mythical occasion when she stole a march on her sisters, Wye and Severn, and won the husband and the dower.

This great commotion of waters, which begins just above the Devil's Bridge, is but two or three hundred yards from the hotel. Its thunders are loud upon your right hand, as you stand by the parapet of the wide roadway fronting the house that commands the dazzling scene below, which I have vainly endeavoured to describe. Borrow gave it up and declared it as beyond his powers—perhaps the better course. But he lingered over the cataracts of the Mynach in great detail, and seems to have been fortunate also in finding a good deal of water coming down. In dry weather these upper cataracts of the Mynach are three or four in number. To-day they seemed almost merged into one, as I stood beside them on various ledges cut in the cliff for the purpose, and to take the whole descent in a single leap. The uproar at such close quarters was deafening. The spray was flying thick and far into the woods around. The leaves seemed all of a tremble with the shaking of the ground and beating of the spray. How the Mynach fared on its farther and long descent to the Rheidol, I could not tell, for it was smothered in woods and played no part in the great scene from the terrace.

That there were plenty of people upon this roomy plateau on such a day and at such a season goes without saying. There was our train-load of the morning, for one thing, or such as had not dived into the steep woodland trails to be hidden from sight till they came panting and perspiring out of them an hour or two later. Private motors, too, were bringing people up from time to time, and lunches were being served in the restaurant of the hotel. But all this company affected the scene no wit. They were as people might be in a gallery looking down on a scene in opera. They couldn't get out to smirch it and detract from its solitude and romance as in most such places. The woods entirely swallowed up any such as dropped down into them. They never came into the picture. It really did not much matter whether you viewed it alone or in a large company. The day was long and I had leisure enough for taking note of the appeal the place seemed to make to this motley company, mostly Midlanders from their unmistakable accent. They were largely of the type who, in the male species, would have been beanfeasters on their native heath and dumped down, let us say, on the Lickey or at Kenilworth. But they were not beanfeasters here in the least. They were subdued and quiet. One might imagine that they were in a measure overawed by the majesty of the scenes before them, by the roaring of the torrents, the thunder of the cataracts beside them. At any rate, they were wonderfully quiet, even after luncheon. Many a perspiring, red-faced matron, coming up to the parapet and into the sudden presence of this wonderful *coup d'œil*, would cease from wagging her Midland cockney tongue, and stand rooted to the spot for long periods of unwonted silence, obviously startled, struck dumb, or at any rate affected for the moment by unwonted sensations. I wondered what precisely the emotions were which animated these primitive, materialistic, ill-equipped souls from the Black Country and held them for so long to all appearance spellbound. One may not know how far their simple souls went out to such an earthly paradise, as it must surely appear to them, such a scene of radiant glory as must fairly dazzle their brick- and smoke-tormented eyes. At least it is a fortunate thing that such hours and moments should be within their reach. There were men, too, in plenty, with the bulging grey cloth caps, that file by thousands in funereal processions on Saturday afternoons along the streets of the industrial towns to watch football matches, bet on them, and testify to the athletic vigour of our race. These, too, seemed subdued and meditative, chastened in spirit by their environment. It was a fresh experience to me. For in all my Welsh days I had never yet encountered the summer holiday crowd before a great spectacle. I had either avoided the August season or spent it in one of the many delectable regions of South Wales unknown to the tourist.

I had nearly the whole day up here, and when I had done all the climbing I can manage nowadays, much time remained in which to sit apart on the terrace and take curious note of the demeanour of each fresh batch of trippers that arrived from Aberystwith. I wandered some way too along the road leading over the Devil's Bridge into the mountains. Away beyond the first range lies Hafod, famous over a century ago for its fine gardens, its valuable library, and scholarly owner, Colonel Edward Johnes, who, besides many notable achievements in reclaiming the waste, was deeply versed in Welsh literature. He was a great collector of treasures, including a mass of old Welsh MS., all gathered into the mansion he built in 1783, which, with its contents, was burned to the ground twenty-five years later—an irreparable misfortune. The Colonel did more tree-planting than anyone in Wales, and the beautiful woods which spread so far around us here are among the legacies of his taste and enterprise. Soon after the the fire, Hafod passed into other hands. Another road to the left, after crossing the bridge, follows the heights above the Rheidol gorge for about two miles to the Parson's Bridge, swung across a chasm through which the river plunges—a scene accounted notable for its wild beauty, but which, alas! I could not compass.

In curious contrast to the groups of trippers coming and going along the bit of roadway between the hotel and station, a modest cattle fair was going on right in their path. Bronzed and weather-beaten farmers from the mountains were here, bestriding ponies of twelve to thirteen hands, the older ones attired in quaint, old-fashioned country garb, and all speaking Welsh with the animation natural to such a stimulating occasion. A few calves, yearlings, and milk cows, with a colt or two, held the interest of the animated little company and their yet more vociferous collie dogs. Their aloofness in type and interest from the groups of trippers that brushed past them was as complete a one, I should imagine, as the British Islands could show. Neither in life, nor speech, nor thought, nor outlook, could there have been a single thing in common.

The little train, again as full as it could hold, took the downward track with a brisk confidence and at a different pace from that at which it climbed the vale. I could not help again reflecting, on the brink of one or two fearsome steeps, what a pretty mess there would be on the banks of the Rheidol, 500 feet below, if our engine tripped on the narrow little rails. My fellow-passengers, however, indulged I am sure in no such flights of fancy. Perhaps they were more engaged with one another than with external affairs. I felt quite ashamed of my own passing fancies. I left Aberystwith for Machynlleth by an evening train, slow in pace and sparsely occupied. We passed over the broad levels of the Rheidol, where that river has ceased from troubling, and dived into the hilly, pastoral country beyond. It was a brilliant evening. The westering sun from the sea lit up the distant hills and mountains from whose feet I had just come with a radiance which boded no good for those to whom the morrow mattered anything. It mattered nothing to me. I had no particular desire to look out of the window between Shrewsbury and Ashford, except perhaps to note how the grain and the hops were coming along. All alike seem dust and ashes in this rapid transit from the hills and streams and colouring of Wales. It has always been so with me, and no doubt with plenty of others : it is inevitable on this eastward journey out of the west, a sort of shock, a sinking, a flat feeling. One recovers, of course, in time, and gets attuned again to the lower standards. The hills and downs, which seem to have almost disappeared, begin to crop up and look like hills again, the grass to recover its tone. But the streams! Well, there are none—none, that is to say, of quality, and one has to do without them.

I had forgotten in the morning that a short way from the line to the eastward and not far from Aberystwith lies the birthplace of the greatest of all Welsh poets. Such absence of mind was inexcusable, though from the line one can only make out the patch of country two or three miles away in which the traces of Dafydd ap Gwylim's ancestral home of Bro-Gynin may still be seen. It is six centuries since the bard first saw the light there, while he died, as noted on a former page, at the moment of Richard II's death, of Henry's usurpation, and Owen Glyndwr's uprising. A modern farm-house near by still bears the old name. He was both well-born and well-educated. The latter advantage was probably due to the interest taken in him by his maternal uncle, Llewelyn, who was not only lord of large estates but a gentleman of culture, to whose castle "all the world flocked". Of the poet's father all that is known is a brief elegy he wrote on the early death of his wife :

> "In memory of Ardudfyl, whom I yet
> Shall join, fair gentle form, on Olivet.
> Deprived of her, oh—what a waste of tears
> To my torn soul this dreary world appears!"

The cynic will say that this foretells a stepmother at the earliest opportunity. It may have been this, coupled with the spendid uncle, the lord of Emlyn's patronage of the clever boy, that apparently kept him away from Bro-Gynin all the earlier part of his life. But he spent many of these years in the rather sumptuous household of another but more distant relative, Ifor Hywel and his wife, Nest, in East Glamorgan, to whom his lifelong devotion appears in many of his poems. Of this couple the present Lord Tredegar is, I believe, a direct descendant, and upon that title owns the estate of which the poet was for a time steward. The foundations of Ifor's mansion are still traceable in Tredegar Park—now, by the sixteenth-century shifting of boundaries, in Monmouthshire. By this time the young poet was evidently rather a highly finished gentleman, for he complains himself in some wrath that while visiting his father's house at Bro-Gynin, the girls in Llanbadam Church on Sunday laughed at his long, well-dressed curls and said they must be his sister's. Dafydd was not only steward to Ifor but, incidentally, tutor to his handsome daughter, Gwenonwy, a quite reckless arrangement, as most naturally the good-looking, clever, romantic, carefully groomed young man fell in love with her at once. As Ifor packed his daughter off to a nunnery in Anglesey, which seems hard on her, we may presume he valued his poetical steward most of the two. But Dafydd quickly found his way to Anglesey and laid siege to the girl in the nunnery by the usual methods of baffled mediæval lovers. But to no purpose—and he had to content himself with writing several poems to his love immured in the "nunnery of stone". This made no difference to his relations with Ifor, and he remained apparently a sort of adopted son of the house. He was also elected chief bard of Glamorgan, the importance of which office in that day was considerable.

But he travelled about Wales a good deal, competing and consorting with other bards, and always an honoured guest at the great houses and castles of the country, all then enjoying the hundred-years peace between the Edwardian conquest and Glyndwr's uprising. He was not unnaturally a great "ladies' man", but such amours as he had or alluded to are quite extinguished in the great and hopeless passion of his life. This was for Morfydd Lawgam, the then reigning beauty of Gwynedd, who was lost to him for ever by her marriage with a wealthy, middle-aged man whom Dafydd also calls a hunchback. This lady queened it in her beauty over a far larger realm than Myfanwy Vychan of Dinas Brân, whose star only illuminated the Vale of Llangollen and broke the heart, so far as we know, of only a single minor poet. The beauty of Morfydd apparently dominated all Anglesea and Carnarvonshire, and inspired no less than a hundred and eighty odes from the greatest Welsh poet of all time. Can any lady in history say this much ?

It was during some prolonged festivities at Rosyr, in Anglesey, that the chief bard of Glamorgan first met the lady, who enthralled him at sight and for life. He ventured to send her a present of wine, which the perhaps spoiled beauty threw in the messenger's face ! But apparently he had already seen her in Bangor Cathedral, listening to the choir :

"This glorious being who is she
I asked myself amazedly.
Sister of stars and moon on high
Is this fair one who draweth nigh."

The crowd, he says, were gazing in rapture at this "daughter of the gentle dawn". But the wealthy hunchback, a warrior of the French wars, held her tight. If she returned in time the poet's love and met him clandestinely, of which there are more than hints in his raptures, it was a brief affair, and in no way mitigated the lifelong devotion of this Welsh Petrarch to his Laura.

Some of his best work seems to have been put into these impassioned odes. Essentially a poet of nature as well as of love, he made use of his powers of imagery by sending many of his missives to Morfydd through the fancied agency of birds or fish, of streams and winds. He entreats the "gull upon the cold grey shore", "the lily of the restless sea", to be his messenger. Or again the wind, as the surest of all envoys:

"Bodiless glory of the sky
That wingless, footless, stern, and loud
Leaps on thy starry path on high
And chantest mid the mountain cloud.

. . . . . .

Ah wind, alas! that I became
A slave to one who bears the name
Of Morfydd fair."

The salmon, too, he would enlist in his service:

"The fairest creature of the sea,
A chieftain of the wave,"

"If thou escapest the spear's sharp blow and the close-meshed net, bold traveller the sea is thine."

"Slide through it fast, I pray,
Strain through the waves and haste away."

Here, again, is his invocation of the skylark:

"Sentinel of the dawning day,
Reveller of the spring,
Ah, wilt thou climb yon heavens for me,
Yon starry turrets height,
Thou interlude of melody
'Twixt darkness and the light,
And find heaven's blessings on thy pinions rest
My lady love, the moonlight of the west."

We find the poet in his old age, which he takes hardly, long after he had retired at his father's death to the paternal estate of Bro-Gynin, still faithful to the memory of his early love and his old friends, all long dead.

"Utterly have passed away
Youthful prowess, spirit gay
Wrung for ever from my tongue
Is the glorious power of song.
Ifor, my illustrious guide,
Nest, my patroness, his bride,

Morfydd, idol of my breast,
All are in the dust at rest.
By a life I loathe oppressed
I am left alone to bear
Time's dread load of grief and care."[1]

Says Sir Edward Anwyl in his preface to Miss Evelyn Lewes' charming little monograph on the poet with selections translated: "Dafydd ap Gwilym was a consummate artist in the use of his native speech, who, by means of his vivid and freshly minted diction, knew not only how to give perfect expression to his conceptions in clearest speech but also how to unlock the reader's imagination and quicken it into spontaneous activity".

He was buried at the Abbey of Strata Florida, where lies the dust of so many of the old princes and chieftains of South Wales. Stimulated by one or two old bardic allusions, fancy has pitched on a solitary and withered yew tree, the sole survivor of many, as marking his resting-place. Borrow at any rate took it seriously, and reverently removing his hat knelt down and kissed its roots, invoking the shade of the poet in Bardic verses mingled with his own.

So much for the Welsh Ovid, the Welsh Petrarch—too much, perhaps, for some readers. But here is Machynlleth once more, and the end of my last day in Wales.

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[1] Translations by the late Arthur Johnes and Miss Evelyn Lewes of Ty-Glyn-Aeron.

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